

Preparing your cervix for labor can be beneficial for the birthing process. Below are a few methods that can aid in thinning and softening of your cervix in the weeks leading up to labor.

## **20 Weeks**

Though the evidence is weak, red raspberry leaf tea has been shown to help tone the uterus, shorten labor and decrease the need in medical intervention. Build up to three cups a day.

## **36 Weeks**

Though not well studied, acupuncture/acupressure/chiropractic care may be beneficial. Specifically, acupuncture has been used for many, many years to help stimulate labor. Chiropractic care may help open and balance the pelvis and ensure baby is in the right position. Be sure to see a pregnancy friendly acupuncturist or chiropractor.

Eating at least six dates a day has been shown to help with cervical ripening, induce spontaneous labor, shorten labor, decrease the need for pitocin and decrease your risk of cesarean section. And there are some many yummy recipes out there to help you meet your daily dates goal (not recommended for diabetics).

## **37 Weeks**

Evening Primrose Oil has been shown in at least one study to induce cervical ripening and Bishop Scores. Take 1000 mg orally twice a day.

Sex has long been known to help with cervical ripening. Semen contains prostaglandins, which are the same hormone used in cervical ripening medications! Orgasms can also help increase uterine activity. The more the merrier!

## **38 Weeks**

Breast stimulation has been known to help ripen the cervix and induce labor since the 1700s. Stimulating the breasts causes the release of Oxytocin. It can also reduce the rate of postpartum hemorrhage. We recommend 10 minutes twice a day (five minutes per breast) using either manual stimulation or a breast pump.

Though not well studied, Clary Sage Oil has also long been used to help induce uterine contractions. We recommend 10 drops daily to the abdomen. Remember to do a small skin patch test first.

## **39 Weeks**

Membrane stripping (or sweeping) is a procedure were your provider separates your amniotic membrane from the lower part of your uterus during a cervical exam. This can help induce labor and prevent the need for post dates induction. This can be done any time after 39 weeks.