



# Membrane sweep



**A membrane sweep can help soften the cervix (opening to the uterus) and start your labour.**

The procedure reduces the need to have your labour induced. This is because it releases a hormone called prostaglandin, which is involved in starting labour.

There are no known risks to having a membrane sweep, but you may find it uncomfortable. Your midwife/doctor will discuss whether this option may work for you.

A membrane sweep will not be performed if you have a vaginal infection as this could spread the infection.

Sweeping the membranes is only offered if you are 39 weeks pregnant, or more.

Having two or even three membrane sweeps 48 hours apart is the most successful way of starting labour.

A membrane sweep is similar to having a vaginal/internal examination or smear test and can be uncomfortable. The midwife/doctor will use some lubricating gel to help reduce the discomfort.

You may experience some tightening or contractions after the sweep; a heat pack or warm shower can help. If you need advice or support, please call the Birth Unit and speak with a midwife.

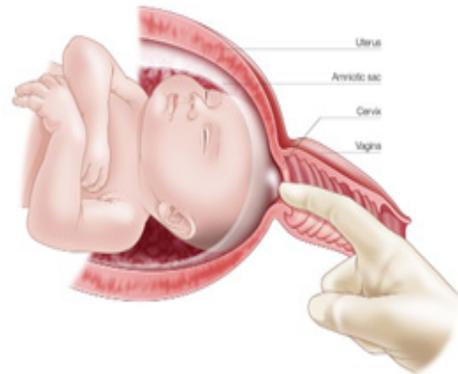
You may experience a 'show' after your membrane sweep, this is a mucousy discharge from the vagina which may contain some blood.

If you have any fresh bleeding from your vagina please phone the Birth Unit and speak with a midwife.

A membrane sweep is usually performed either in the Birth Unit or in the Antenatal Clinic and takes about 10 minutes. You do not need to do anything to prepare for it.

## How is a membrane sweep performed?

1. The midwife/doctor will explain the procedure to you.
2. You will be asked to lie on a couch or bed and remove your underwear. The midwife/doctor will make sure you are comfortable.
3. The midwife/doctor will examine which way your baby is lying by feeling your tummy. Your baby's heartbeat will also be checked.
4. You will be examined internally. The midwife/doctor will use their finger to separate the membranes surrounding your baby from the wall of the womb



<https://www.ranzcog.edu.au/Womens-Health/Patient-Information-Resources/Induction-of-Labour>

After your membrane sweep you should wear a sanitary pad. You will be able to go home to wait for your labour to start. Many women go into labour within 48 hours.

We will also give you information explaining the induction process if you need one.

## Birth Unit Contact Information

**Blue Mountains**  
(02) 4784 6572

**Nepean**  
(02) 4734 2295 or (02) 4734 2294

**Lithgow**  
(02) 6350 2324



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