



# Vaginal examination



**A vaginal examination (internal exam) is a procedure that a midwife or doctor performs to check the cervix (opening to the uterus).**

This may be done to check and see if your cervix is ripe (ready to labour) or once you start having contractions to check on the progress of your labour.

An internal exam is most commonly done at the end of your pregnancy.

The exam may not be carried out if you are early or mid-pregnancy, if you have a low lying placenta, or if you have experienced any heavy bleeding in pregnancy.

You may find it uncomfortable and experience some slight vaginal bleeding or discharge afterwards. This is fairly common.

If your waters have already broken, an internal exam can still be performed, but not too frequently, as it can increase the risk of infection to you and/or your baby.

The exam is usually performed either in the Birth Unit, FMAU (day stay unit) or in the Antenatal Clinic and takes about 10 minutes. You do not need to do anything to prepare for it.

Please tell us know if you prefer a female carer and we will do our best to make this happen.

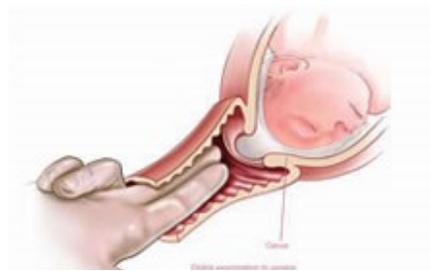
The exam can be uncomfortable. The midwife/doctor will use some lubricating gel to help reduce the discomfort. In most cases, the exam itself may only take a minute or two. You may experience some tightening or contractions afterwards, a heat pack or warm shower can help.

If you need advice or support please call your midwife.

You may experience a 'show' after your exam, this is a mucousy discharge from the vagina which may contain some blood. If you have any fresh bleeding from your vagina please telephone the Birth Unit and speak with a midwife.

## How is an internal exam performed?

1. The midwife/doctor will explain the procedure to you.
2. You will be asked to lie on a couch or bed, remove your underwear and they will make sure you are comfortable.
3. They will examine which way your baby is lying by feeling your tummy and they will also check your baby's heartbeat.
4. They will examine you internally, using their fingers.
5. You will then be able to sit up and get dressed.
6. The findings of the exam will be explained to you.



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After your internal exam you should wear a sanitary pad. Some women may experience some period-like pain or tightening after an internal. In some cases, it may be necessary for you to be admitted to hospital overnight, or you may be able to go home and wait for your labour to start.

You will be given more information explaining induction if you need one.

Please contact the Birth Unit and talk to a midwife if:

- Your contractions become stronger and more regular, or too painful
- You are worried about your baby's movements
- You have any heavy bleeding
- You think your waters have broken
- You are feeling unwell
- You have any other concerns

## 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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