

Oxytocin

- Oxytocin is a natural hormone that manages key aspects of the female reproductive systems and it is used to start or strengthen contractions to continue (augment) labour and to control bleeding after the birth of your baby.
- The medicine is administered through a cannula (transparent tube) in one of your veins and is diluted as an intravenous infusion (drip). An electronic pump is used to give the specific dose.
- Oxytocin is very commonly used on the labour ward. When making the decision to use a medicine, the risks must be weighed against the benefit. This is a discussion between you and the maternity team.
- Oxytocin can be very useful for helping labour by increasing the tone of the muscles in the uterus resulting in stronger contractions and increasing the number of contractions if labour progress is slow with an aim to you having a vaginal birth. All other reasons for slow progress in labour will be ruled out by the maternity team.
- In women who are unusually sensitive to its effects, these contractions may become too strong. Very strong contractions or very frequent contractions could cause the baby to become distressed. Because of this, the oxytocin starts at a very low dose (1 millilitre) and is gradually increased until you are contracting 3 or 4 times every 10 minutes. The baby is monitored continuously when oxytocin is used.
- The oxytocin can be stopped at any time and a medicine called Terbutaline can be given to relax the uterus and stop contractions.
- If, for any reason you do not wish to use oxytocin as part of your induction or to provide more contractions during your labour, the maternity team will support your decision. At this point a caesarean birth will be discussed with you.
- If you have been using oxytocin and wish to stop at any time, the maternity team will support your decision and options will be discussed. One of these options will be a caesarean birth.
- If you have chosen a caesarean section birth at any point in your labour, the maternity team will keep you informed of the timing we can facilitate this depending on the activity on the labour ward. This maybe some time following the decision and obtaining your consent however your midwife will keep you updated. This maybe the next day depending on the time of your decision, the reason for a caesarean birth and the safest time for the maternity team to support your choice. Emergency theatre cases will take priority.
- If there are any concerns with your health or your baby, an urgent caesarean birth will be undertaken.
- If you have any further questions, please speak with your midwife or doctor.