



Premature rupture of membranes

You are receiving this information because your membranes have ruptured in your pregnancy.

Your baby is inside a fluid-filled sac in your uterus (womb). This is the amniotic sac or membranes.

Usually, these membranes rupture (break) before or during labour, close to your due date. When this happens, the fluid around your baby starts to leak from your vagina. This is commonly known as your water breaking.

In your case, this happened before labour started and earlier than expected, before 37 weeks, which is considered 'term'.

This can happen in up to 3 in 100 pregnancies (3%) and is linked with babies being born 'preterm' or before their due date.

What happens now?

Once the membranes break, there is a higher chance that labour will start on its own (spontaneously). This is why you'll be watched in a hospital where they can take care of your baby if it is born early. The medical team will explain what will happen if labour starts and what the plan for birth would be in your situation.

You'll get steroid injections if you are less than 35 weeks pregnant. These injections help your baby do better if they are born early. You'll get 2 injections, given 24 hours apart.

The membranes protect your baby. If they break, there is a higher risk of infection in the uterus. This infection is called chorioamnionitis and can be dangerous for both you and your baby.

If you get an infection, you'll be given antibiotics. It's also recommended you give birth. This may involve starting labour or having a caesarean section, depending on your situation.

If there are no signs of infection or other complications, we recommend keeping the pregnancy going until 37 weeks. This reduces the risk of complications for your baby from being born early (prematurity).

However, if there are problems before 37 weeks, it may be safer to have your baby early. Your doctor will discuss this with you.

Can you go home from hospital?

You may be safe to go home after a few days in hospital if:

- you are over 28 weeks pregnant and have been stable in hospital for at least 72 hours
- your baby's is head down (cephalic)
- you have no signs of labour
- you have no signs of infection (chorioamnionitis)
- you are able to check your temperature and pulse at home
- you are willing to return to hospital for appointments at least twice a week
- you can return to the hospital quickly if you notice any concerns.

If you do go home, we will ask you to:

- check your temperature and pulse 3 times a day. **Come to the hospital if:**
 - your temperature is over 37.2°C
 - your pulse is above 100 beats per minute (bpm) when you're resting (sitting or lying down).
- watch the colour of the discharge from your vagina. **Come to the hospital if:**
 - it smells bad
 - it changes colour
 - it has blood in it.
- pay attention to your baby's movements. **Come to the hospital if:**
 - your baby moves less often or not as strongly as usual.
- **Come to the hospital if** you feel unwell, are in pain, have contractions or have a tender uterus.

We will see you twice a week at the pregnancy clinic or Pregnancy Day Care Centre (PDCC). We can see you more often, if needed.

We will check for infection by taking blood tests and monitoring your health and your baby's health. This might include a cardiotocography (heart rate monitor) and/or an ultrasound.

We have a Hospital in the Home (HITH) program that might work for you. This means a midwife will come to your home to do some of these checks. It won't replace all your appointments and depends on availability and where you live.

What to do if you're worried

If you have any concerns at any time, please go to the Emergency Department (WEC) on the lower ground floor at The Royal Women's Hospital. It is always open - 24 hours, 7 days a week.

We encourage you to come in, even if you feel like it is for something minor

Do you need an interpreter?



You can ask for an interpreter, if you need one.

Family Violence Support

1800 Respect National Helpline

You can get help if you have experienced sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse.

You can call any time of day or night.

1800 737 732

1800respect.org.au