

Preparing for Birth

Raspberry Leaf Tea

Raspberry leaf is a uterine tonic, which also has added benefits after the birth for breastmilk production. You can buy some from your health food store. It's generally recommended any time after 24 weeks in a healthy pregnancy. Make sure you check with your medical professional or speak with a naturopathic doctor to see if it's appropriate for you.

Eat Date Fruit

Consuming six pieces of date fruit a day from 36wks on **“significantly reduce the need for an induction and/or augmentation of labor and produced a more favorable outcome”**

According to a study on the effects of late pregnancy consumption of date fruit on labor and delivery: “We set out to investigate the effective date fruit consumption on labor parameters and delivery outcomes. 69 women consumed six date fruits per day for four weeks prior to the estimated date of delivery, compared with 45 women who consumes none. The women who consumed date fruit:

- Had significantly higher mean cervical dilation upon admission compared with the non-date fruit consumers. (3.52 cm vs. 2.02 cm)
- Had a significantly higher proportion of intact membranes. (83% vs. 60%)
- Spontaneous labor occurred in 96% of those who consumed dates, compared with 79% of women in the non-date fruit consumers.
- Use of Pitocin, for inducing/augmenting labor, was significantly lower in women who consume dates (28%), compared with non-date fruit consumers (47%).
- The mean latent Phase of the first stage of labor was shorter and women who consumed date fruit compared with the non-date fruit consumers, 510 minutes vs 906 minutes.

It is concluded that the consumption of date fruit in the last four weeks before labor significantly reduce the need for induction and augmentation of labor and produced a more favorable but nonsignificant delivery outcome. The results warrant a randomized controlled trial.”

Evening Primrose oil (EPO)

Evening Primrose oil is another cervix ripening method. EPO helps by imitating prostaglandins and can be used orally or internally. A usual oral dose is 2 to 3 of 500 mg capsules daily from 36 weeks. If you were taking EPO internally you can do this from 36 weeks— simply insert 2 to 3 capsules directly into the cervix before bed you might like to wear a pad or liner as it can get messy when you get up.

Prenatal Perineal Massage

As scientific studies have confirmed, regular massage of the inside of a woman's perineum in late pregnancy helps prepare the perineum to stretch adequately during the birth. Prenatal perineal massage can reduce the need for an episiotomy and reduces the likelihood that the mother's tissues will spontaneously tear during birth. Prenatal perineal massage lets the expectant mother experience sensations that are similar to those she will feel as the baby emerges, and it gives her a chance to practice relaxing her perineum as she should during delivery.

I advise my doula clients to use perineal massage for four to six weeks before their due date. Some women find the massage distasteful and decide not to do it; others find it pleasurable or sexually stimulating, which is a bonus. Most who do it regularly find it very beneficial.

