What is it? Why is it used?
Pregnant women who are overdue by 1 ½ weeks are given Cytotec to induce labor and soften the cervix.

What does it do?
Cytotec is a tablet that is inserted in the vagina. It softens the cervix and induces contractions. Once inserted it cannot be removed, nor its effects stopped. The baby’s heart rate, the mother’s contractions and her other vital signs (heart rate and blood pressure) must be continuously monitored.

Contraindications or Possible Side Effects
- Cytotec has been known to cause tears in the uterus, and cause the uterus to contract too fast, or to many times in a short period of time and cause the baby’s heart to beat too fast, or to slow.
- It should never be used if you have had a prior C-section.
- Serious reactions include miscarriage and fetal malformation. In rare cases it has been known to cause cardiac arrest, life-threatening respiratory distress, stop the blood flow to the heart, and irregular heartbeat.
- Cytotec can also cause amniotic fluid, fetal cells, hair, or other debris to enter the mother's circulation, causing heart and lung collapse.
- Cytotec is in the FDA pregnancy category X, meaning it is known to be harmful to an unborn baby. Death of mother and baby have been reported.
- Adequate data on the risks and benefits of the drug for use in labor has not been collected.

Source: http://www.birthingnaturally.net/birthplan/informedmedc.html

1. Lit from Searle 8/2000; FDA
5. Cochrane Review, Luckes Bricker July 1, 2000
7. JAMA study May 4, 2005
8. ACOG , VBAC guidelines Childbirth.org 1998
10. American Family Physician May 1, 1999, Sutter Health (Health Wise)
C-Section

(Continued from opposite page)

C-Sections are indicted when mother and/or baby are in distress during labor or high risk due to stools from the baby in the fluid, blood pressure abnormalities, and tears in the uterus.

What does it do?
A C-section is a major abdominal surgery performed in a hospital operating room. Incisions are made into the abdomen and uterus. Baby is then lifted out.

Contraindications or Possible Side Effects
- Studies show there is a two to three time greater chance of maternal death with a C-section and this risk rises with each subsequent cesarean.
- Scarring from C-sections can cause long-term risk of bowel obstructions, as much as 20 years post surgery.
- C-Sections are associated with higher stillborn rates in subsequent birth, inability to conceive in the future, higher rates of severe bleeding, deep wounds to the baby and respiratory disease. There is also some risk of pelvic nerve injury, and removal of the uterus.
- C-Sections often require a longer hospital stay and a significantly longer recovery.

Epidural

What is it? Why is it used?
Epidurals are used during labor and delivery to decrease the pain associated with childbirth.

What does it do?
An epidural relaxes the pelvic muscles and the nerves are bathed in the local anesthetic medication, which causes insensitivity to pain. You will still feel the pressure of the contractions and the urge to push. A needle is placed between the vertebrae (in your spine) into a space called an epidural space. Medication is then placed into this space. A small tube is then threaded through the needle into the space and the needle withdrawn. The tube is left in place and taped so that it does not move. You can then be given a continuous small amount of medication or be given an extra dose when you begin to have pain.

Contraindications or Possible Side Effects
- Epidurals can cause a drop in blood pressure and in rare cases an allergic reaction to the medication.
- Occasionally, labor can be slowed down.
- Use of an epidural is associated with increased C-section rate and the baby’s heart beating to fast or to slow.
- The drugs used to decrease pain can affect the mother and baby’s breastfeeding and alertness.
- Fever
- Many times causes labor to last longer
- May cause need for a tube to be inserted so the mom can urinate.
- Need for continuous electronic fetal monitoring.

Episiotomy

What is it? Why is it used?
A surgical cut used during labor and delivery when the baby’s heart beat is to fast or to slow and there is a medical necessity to birth the baby faster.

What does it do?
A surgical cut that is made to the skin at the base of the vagina during the pushing stage of labor. There are two main types of cuts. A midline episiotomy is cut straight down towards the anus. A medio-lateral is cut to the side.

An episiotomy may shorten pushing by 5 to 15 minutes allowing for the baby to be born faster.

Contraindications or Possible Side Effects
- Episiotomies significantly cause increased pain during recovery.
- The average length of healing time for an episiotomy is 1-2 months.
- Episiotomies increase the incidence of deep tears into the rectum.
- There is an increased risk for infection and more bleeding when the skin is cut.

Internal Fetal Monitoring

What is it? Why is it used?
During labor most women are monitored with external monitoring that will record the baby’s heart rate and mother’s contractions. More exact information may be needed when certain high risk situations occur, such as elevated blood pressure, diabetes or if there has been periods when the baby’s heart rate has fallen very low.

What does it do?
An electrode (small wire) is placed on the baby’s scalp. It is called a fetal scalp electrode (FSE). Often, another monitor is inserted into the uterus. Both monitors are placed through your vagina. After this you will not be able to walk around, sit or shower/bathe.

Contraindications or Possible Side Effects
- The presence of a placenta before the baby’s head which prevent placement of moniter.
- If the cervix is more than 9 centimeters dilated it may be more difficult to place the internal uterine monitor.
- Some risk of infection.

Adverse conditions: Placenta separation due to improper placement. This might result in your baby’s heartbeat changing or vaginal bleeding. However both are limited and generally there are no long-term consequences.

Pitocin

What is it? Why is it used?
Used when a doctor deems it necessary to induce labor or augment labor. Administered by Intravenous (IV) drip in arm, it is given to women whose labor seems to be slowing to increase contractions and bring about birth.

What does it do?
A synthetic version of a natural hormone that causes the uterus to contract and used to induce labor, strengthen labor contractions during childbirth, control bleeding after childbirth, or to induce an abortion. For labor should only be administered in an IV with fetal monitoring. After childbirth, it can be administered as an injection into a muscle or intravenously to control bleeding. It should be administered in a clinical setting where a healthcare provider can monitor uterine contractions and other vital signs (blood pressure, heart rates) and where an emergency situation can be handled properly. Speeds up or augments labor contractions. Increases strength and length of contractions.

Contraindications or Possible Side Effects
- Pitocin should not be used in elective labor induction (induction without medical indications) because of inadequate data to evaluate benefit versus risk.
- Common reactions to oxytocin include nausea, vomiting and increased tension of the uterine muscles. Allergic reaction can cause shortness of breath, closing of the throat and hives.
- Difficultly breathing or urinating has been reported, as has excessive vaginal bleeding and seizures.

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