

Sweeping of Membranes & Cervical Massage

Sweeping of membranes is a technique that aims to promote the onset of labour and avoid the need for in-hospital induction. During your clinic visits after 38 weeks, your doctor will check your cervix during a vaginal exam to see how likely you are to go into labour. During these visits your doctor or midwife can place a finger inside the cervix and move it in a circle. This helps separate the amniotic sac from your cervix, which releases hormones that help prepare your body for labour. If your cervix is still closed, your doctor can massage your cervix for 15-30 seconds to help release the same hormones.

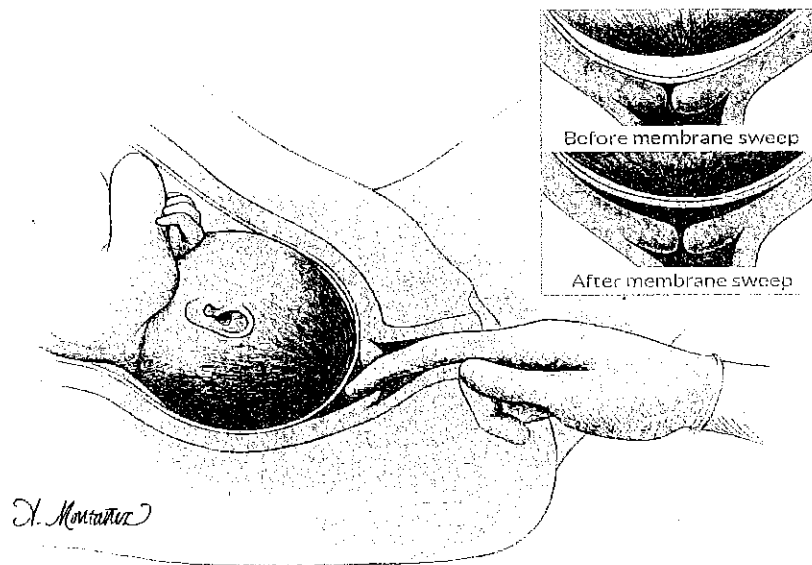


Figure 1. Sweeping of membranes: Courtesy of Amanda Montanez [1]

Whether because of high blood pressure, diabetes, or other situations, delivery may be important for the health of you or your baby. As well, there are increased risks if you have not delivered your baby by 42 weeks gestational age. Sweeping of membranes encourages your body to go into labour using its own hormones. It does not guarantee that you will go into labour, but studies have shown that it may help women avoid formal induction^[2].

Studies have also shown that sweeping of membranes does not pose any serious risk to you or your baby. However, most women experience discomfort and some have small amounts of bleeding over the next day. Others may start to have contractions but do not progress to full labour^[2].

If you have questions or concerns about this procedure please discuss them with your doctor or midwife.

1. Montañez, A. 2014, University of Toronto. **Visual Tools to Support Informed Choice:** uoft.me/visualtools
2. Boulvain, M., C.M. Stan, and O. Irion, *Membrane sweeping for induction of labour (Review)*. The Cochrane Library, 2010(1): p. 1-92.