

EXTERNAL CEPHALIC VERSION (ECV)

External cephalic version or turning, is a procedure in which the presentation of the fetus is changed artificially from a breech or transverse lie, to a head down presentation. It is to attempt a vaginal delivery and avoid a c-section. It is performed by the obstetrician, at the hospital, after 37 weeks gestation. The patient must not have anything to eat or drink after midnight the night before the procedure, in case of complications where an emergency c-section must be done. An intravenous is started prior to the version. An ultrasound is done within a week of the version to confirm presentation and fluid levels.

Success Rate: Multiparous (had previous vaginal delivery): 40 – 50%
Primigravida (no previous delivery): 30%

Major Complications: 1%
This includes abruptio placenta (separation of the placenta), cord prolapse and cord compression.

Minor Complications: 6 – 9%
This includes rupture of membranes, transient fetal heart rate changes or onset of labour.

Contraindications: 1) Low amniotic fluid
2) Pregnancy induced hypertension
3) Intrauterine growth retardation

Technique: Under ultrasound guidance, the version is done solely by external manipulation of the fetus. The fetal heart is monitored continuously before, during and after the procedure. If successful, the pregnancy is allowed to continue with the goal of a vaginal birth. If unsuccessful, a date for a c-section will be discussed and booked.