

ALL IN GOOD TIME

thoughts on "due dates" | websites & blogs

How long is a woman pregnant for? 9 months? That is what we grow up understanding and then, when you find out you are pregnant you discover that 40 weeks is considered the norm. But how accurate is this figure?

The 40 week due date is based upon on something called Naegele's Rule. In the mid 18th century a botanist called Harmanni Boerhaave, came up with a method of calculating the EDD based upon evidence in the Bible that human gestation lasts approximately 10 lunar months. In the early 19th century this formula was publicised by a German obstetrician called Franz Naegele. However, a lunar month (from new moon to new moon) is actually 29.53 days, which makes 10 lunar months roughly 295 days, a full 15 days longer than the 280 days (40 weeks) gestation that we seem to consider normal. Added to this, the fact that most methods of calculating gestational length are based upon a 28 day cycle, when in fact most women find that their cycles can vary and may be longer or shorter than 28 days, and you can begin to understand how the EDD can be far from accurate. Even those who are lucky enough to have a regular 28 day cycle do not always ovulate right on day 14. So, why is this a problem?

Well generally speaking, when you reach 40 weeks your midwife will discuss with you the options for being 'overdue', even though the largest study done into gestational length showed that for first time mothers the average pregnancy length is 41 weeks and a day.

If you come under pressure from your midwife or consultant to have an induction because they consider that you are 'overdue', you can be armed with official recommendations. **Informed decision making** is key. The **AIMS publication on induction** is invaluable, they have a helpline too. Hugely respected midwife, researcher Sara Wickham has **ten things she wants every woman to know about induction**. Mary Cronk **answers just about every question you might have about continuing your pregnancy - especially with regards a home birth - here**.

It's important to remember that no matter how impatient you are to meet your baby, or how fed up you are of being pregnant, the last 2 weeks of your baby's development in the womb are key for his brain and lung maturity. Waiting until he is ready and letting nature take it's course gives him the best possible chance of coming into this world without breathing issues and he is more likely to be alert and able to feed well straight away. If you are over 42 weeks you can ask to be monitored closely and your midwife should be able to tell if there are any signs that your baby needs to be born. Signs such as a reduction in the amount of amniotic fluid, a reduction in baby's movement, and signs of distress via the heart beat.

Finally, here's a thought for you. If you try to pick a blackberry before it is ready it can be tough to get it off the bush without using pressure that may damage the fruit, but if you wait until it has had all the time it needs to fully ripen, the fruit practically falls off into your hand! The same can be said for your baby. Remember, babies can't read calendars, they come in their own time and almost always without complication when left alone to be born when they are truly ready. Be patient and enjoy the special extra time that you have with your baby still inside you, and rest!

get out of your head

go for a walk, swim, yoga
catch up with friends over cake
book a massage
go for acupuncture / reflexology
take a trip to the seaside and watch the waves
read positive birth stories and watch some great birth films
make a mood board at home filled with affirmations and imagery
great blog post about EDDs from birth without fear

a post from Gloria Lemay about how birthing women bloom when the time is right - it's brilliant!

the last part of pregnancy is a very important time - read about **zwischen** here

positive birth story websites

www.berryandbloom.com/blog/
www.positivebirthmovement.org
www.tellmeagoodbirthstory.com
www.thepositivebirthstorypodcast.com

links in bold are all clickable