**Stretch and Sweep/Membrane Stripping**

Once you are at least 38 weeks pregnant you can request a stretch and sweep/membrane stripping at your scheduled clinic appointment.

A stretch and sweep involves a midwife putting two fingers into the vagina and attempting to access the cervix in order to stretch it by placing two finger into the cervix and stretching them apart and/or to sweep it by placing one finger through the cervix and using it to sweep between the cervix and the bag of waters/membranes of the amniotic sac.

Research shows that term stretch and sweeps may help reduce the likelihood that your pregnancy goes so far past your due date that you are offered a medical induction of labour. It is unlikely that you will start labouring soon after you have a stretch and sweep especially if it is your first pregnancy. A stretch and sweep is offered to help the cervix start to prepare for spontaneous labour a few days before it would have done without the intervention. In most pregnancies spontaneous labour would happen by 41-42 weeks without any stretch and sweeps being done.

It is possible, especially in first pregnancies prior to your due date, that the cervix may be too far back to reach or may still be long and closed, in which case a stretch and sweep will not be possible. If the cervix is closed then the midwife can offer a cervical massage as an alternative where they would massage the end of the cervix.

It is normal to experience discomfort and possibly pain during a stretch and sweep as the cervix is sensitive to touch. You can always decline a stretch and sweep AT ANY TIME even if you previously asked for one and even if the process has already started.

According to the research, it is unlikely but still possible that a stretch and sweep could cause your water to break.

We CANNOT GUARANTEE that we will be able to offer a stretch and sweep to you even if you want one. We may need to postpone a desired stretch and sweep if your team midwife on call is already busy or if another client is more overdue than you. We do not schedule extra clinic visits or see you at home to offer stretch and sweeps until after 41 weeks of pregnancy. Once you are 41 weeks pregnant we offer a stretch and sweep every 2 days if possible and we reschedule for the earliest date possible if we are unable to offer a stretch and sweep on a particular day.

Many clients decide not to have any stretch and sweeps or to only accept stretch and sweeps once they are past their due date.

**What to Expect After a Stretch and Sweep**

After a Stretch and Sweep it is **NORMAL** to experience any of the following:

* A small amount of bright red spotting on your underwear/liner/toilet paper
* Cramping in your uterus that may be painful
* A small amount of gel-like discharge
* Not feeling any different than before the stretch and sweep

If is safe to do the following as needed to be more comfortable after a Stretch and Sweep:

* Rest
* Have a bath or shower or use a hot water bottle or heating pad
* Take up to 1000mg of Tylenol every 6 hours
* Take 50-100mg of Gravol every 6 hours to help you fall asleep
* Walk or do normal activities if you feel like it
* Eat and drink normally

**You should page your midwife at 905-353-0852 ext. 3 if:**

* You have strong regular active labour contractions coming every 411(if it is your first labour/first vaginal delivery) or 511(you have previously had a vaginal delivery)
* Your water breaks
* You have heavy bleeding like a heavy period that fills a menstrual pad
* Your baby is not moving as normal and you do not get at least 6 movements in a 2 hour Fetal Kick Count