

# UNPLUGGING THE MYSTERY

Everything you need to know about the mucus plug!

## WHAT'S A MUCUS PLUG?

During pregnancy, the cervix continually produces mucus. This collection of the mucus, is what's known as, the mucus plug. It's responsible for creating a barrier at the opening of the cervix to prevent bacteria from entering the uterus and potentially causing an infection.

## ANTICIPATING THE LOSS

The mucus plug is typically lost as the body gets ready for labor, but the timing can differ significantly. Most commonly, the mucus plug is lost closer to term, 37-42 weeks of pregnancy, as the body prepares for labor (the softening, dilation, and effacement of the cervix).

Sometimes, the mucus plug may be lost earlier in pregnancy. This can be a variation of normal. Remember, the cervix continues to produce mucus throughout pregnancy, providing the opportunity for the mucus plug to regenerate and offer continued protection against infection.

## IS LABOR IMMINENT?

Losing the mucus plug can be a sign that the body is preparing for labor, but losing the mucus plug alone is not an indication of how soon labor will start. Labor can still be days or even weeks away. If you notice that you lost your mucus plug prior to term and/or w/o signs of labor, this could be in response to:

- Cervical changes • Sexual intercourse • Vaginal exams • Infections • Hormonal changes

## LOSS WITH SIGNS OF LABOR

The loss of your mucus plug is not the sole indicator of labor approaching; however, it should be noted alongside other signs and symptoms of labor, including:

**\*\*Regular Contractions\*\*:**

Contractions that are increasing in frequency and strength.

**\*\*Lower Back Pain\*\*:**

Pain that can be consistent or come and go, mimicking the rhythm of contractions.

**\*\*Rupture of Membranes\*\*:**

This can be a sudden gush or a slow trickle of fluid.

**\*\*Bloody Show\*\*:**

A mixture of cervical blood and mucus.

**\*\*Pelvic Pressure\*\*:**

Increased by the baby descending into the birth canal.

**\*\*Nesting\*\*:**

A sudden burst of energy and the urge to clean and organize.

**\*\*Cervical Changes\*\*:**

Dilation (opening) and effacement (thinning) of the cervix.

## HOW WILL YOU KNOW

You might not always realize when you've lost your mucus plug.

**Timing:**

- Can come out all at once or gradually over days or weeks.
- May happen during early labor when contractions start.
- Can be lost while using the restroom, making it easy to miss.

**Appearance:**

- Usually clear, off-white, or pink-tinged.
- Can have streaks of blood, giving it a red or brownish tint.

**Detection:**

- Can blend with regular vaginal discharge, making it hard to notice.

## DOES YOUR PROVIDER NEED TO KNOW?

No, not unless it's accompanied by signs and symptoms of labor or infection. You don't need to call them at 1 a.m. to tell them that you lost your mucus plug. Take note of when you lost it and reach out during regular business hours or through the 24/7 nurse line, send a message via your client portal, or inform them at your next prenatal visit.

