

What is your mucus plug and what is its function?

The mucous plug is exactly what it sounds like - a plug made of mucus! This plug is formed in the cervical canal and provides protection against bacteria entering the uterus. It can look various ways. It can be clear, yellowish/green, pinkish, brown, or a blend of any of these colours. It is often streaked with blood. It can come out as one solid gooey mass and look gelatinous or can come out in bits and pieces as it dislodges slowly.

When does a woman lose her mucus plug?

A pregnant woman usually loses this plug at "term" (anytime between 37-42 weeks) or during labour.

What does it mean when you lose your mucus plug?

When you lose your mucous plug it means the cervix is ripening (ie softening, dilating, thinning) to some degree to allow it to pass. Having sex or a vaginal exam can also dislodge your mucus plug or cause you to see some bloody discharge. Labour could still be hours, days or even weeks away as the cervix ripens slowly over time. Keep in mind you may or may not notice the plug, some women go through the whole process never having seen it at all.

What happens if you lose it too early?

If the plug dislodges prior to 37 weeks then you should let your health care provider know. Losing the plug alone, prior to 37 weeks, without contractions or other signs of labour is not necessarily cause for alarm. However your caregiver should be informed to review signs of pre-term labour with you and have a visit to be assessed. If the plug passes early it doesn't mean that labour will necessarily start, just a sign that there is cervical change enough to allow it to pass. If labour doesn't start then this plug can re-generate to some extent and continue to provide protection.

What other complications can be associated with a mucus plug?

Nothing other than a potential sign of preterm labour

Please feel free to add anything else you think would be helpful.

You may wonder what the difference is between the mucous plug and "bloody show." Bloody show is a term for blood that is passing from the vagina that is often mixed with mucus. This is also a sign that the cervix is thinning (effacing) and or dilating. As these changes happen the little blood vessels in your cervix rupture, hence the blood, which is a good thing. This can happen at the end of the pregnancy and is expected during labour. During labour this is a sign of progress. A little blood is encouraging but if it is bright red, not mixed with mucus and more than a tablespoon then you should call your health care provider.

There is no sure way to predict when labour will happen, there are only signs that your body is preparing for it. You will only know for sure when you start contracting regularly. Remember to be kind to yourself during these last few weeks. Balance your life with both rest and activity. Remember to have some fun, distract yourself - go to the movies, go for walks or go out for a romantic dinner!