

## Turning a breech baby in the uterus (External cephalic version)

### What is external cephalic version?

Babies are usually in the head first position when labour begins. If your baby is in the breech position (bottom first), it is likely that you will be offered an external cephalic version (ECV). The doctor will attempt to turn the baby so the head is facing downwards. It is possible to try this after 36 weeks of pregnancy. It is more likely that you can have a normal delivery if the baby is in the head first position.

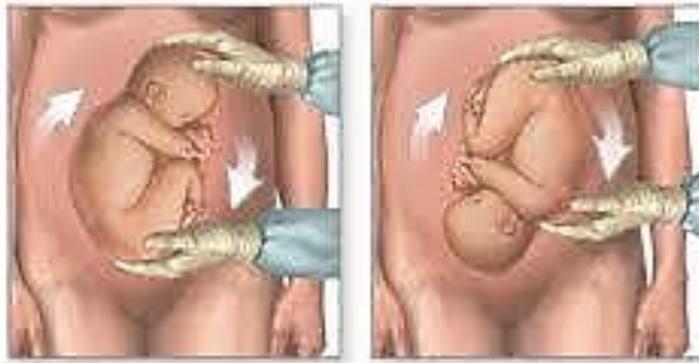


### How is it done?

- ECV is done at the hospital.
- You will be given an appointment at the maternity ward.
- You will be asked not to eat anything after midnight, but you may drink clear fluids until 2 hours before the procedure.
- When you arrive we will monitor the baby's heart rate.
- Your blood pressure and pulse will be recorded.
- The obstetrician or a midwife will confirm the position of the baby.
- About 5-15 minutes before the ECV is attempted we usually give a medication called Bricanyl® to prevent contractions in the uterus. The medication causes relaxation of smooth muscles found in veins, the respiratory system and the uterus. This can cause side effects for a short time, such as fast heart rate, sweating, tremors and, occasionally, breathlessness.
- The obstetrician will attempt the ECV. The hands are placed on the head and the bottom of the baby and pressed in a half circle. This can be uncomfortable, but shouldn't be painful. During the procedure, the baby's heart rate will be monitored with the ultrasound.
- After the procedure is finished the baby's heart rate will be monitored for about 30 minutes. If everything is normal, you may go home.
- Women who have Rhesus Negative blood group will receive an injection to prevent antibodies.
- ECV is successful for about 50% of all women.

- If the ECV is unsuccessful, you will be given information about Caesarean section and a date for this.
- At Landspítali University Hospital in Reykjavík, women have a choice of delivering vaginally, providing they fulfil all the criteria.

### External version



ADAM

### When is ECV not attempted?

- If the waters have broken.
- If the placenta is low or covering the cervix.
- If there is an indication of distress in the baby.
- With multiple pregnancy.
- On some occasions we have to assess individual cases to see if ECV is appropriate, e.g. if labour has begun, if there is little water around the baby, if the baby is small for dates, if the mother has a scar on or malformation of the uterus, pre-eclampsia or heart disease.

### Is ECV safe?

Side effects are rare, but the most common are contractions, waters breaking and slowing down of the baby's heart rate (usually for a short time). Serious side effects such as clamping of the umbilical cord or placental loss are very rare (<1%), but could mean having to do a Caesarean section very quickly.

You can expect that the procedure takes around 2 hours.

[Link to a video on YouTube, about turning a breech](#)