



OH BABY! IS IT TIME?

How to Know if You're in Labor

Labor is the work that your body does to birth your baby. The contractions help the cervix to open and push out your baby when it is time.

What happens in early labor?

Hormonal changes in your body prepare mom and baby for birth and breastfeeding.

There is often pre-labor where you have contractions that start and stop - these gradually turn into early labor.

- Early labor contractions usually start mild and will be about 20 minutes apart. As labor progresses, the contractions become stronger and closer together.
- Active labor begins when you have regular contractions and your cervix is dilated to about 6 centimeters.

What should I do when the contractions start?

- Walk! If the pains you are having are real labor, walking will make the contractions come faster and harder. If the contractions are not going to continue and be real labor, walking will make the contractions slow down.
- Take a shower or bath. This will help you relax.
- Eat. Labor is a big event! It takes a lot of energy.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Take a nap if you can.
- Don't panic! You can do this! Your body was made for this. You are strong!

What are some ways I can stay comfortable laboring at home?

- Move around or change positions.
- Try slow, deep breathing.
- Use a warm pad or ice pack on your lower back.
- Read a good book or watch TV.

How can a partner or friend help me?

- Offer comfort, giving reassurance.
- Help time contractions.
- Play simple games.
- Give you a gentle massage - on your back, your feet, even your hands.

How do I know when to go to the medical center?

- Active labor begins when contractions are about 3-5 minutes apart, last 1 minute and have been that way for 1-2 hours.
- Your water breaks or you have a "gush" of fluid.

If you're just not sure, you are always welcome to come to the medical center. We can check on your progress and the well-being of your baby. But if you are not in active labor, you will likely be discharged home.