

# Your Guide to Labour



This is a theoretic description of labour. It may or may not describe your own birthing experience.



WHAT'S GOING ON  
IN YOUR BODY?



HOW YOU MIGHT  
BE FEELING



TIPS

## As labour is about to begin

### What's going on in your body?

**Lightening** : when baby drops into the pelvis. If this is your first baby, it'll happen anywhere between 2 to 6 weeks before you go into labour. With following pregnancies, it usually happens once labour has begun.

**Bloody show**: light trickling, or a few drops of blood mixed with mucus.

**Mucus plug**: might be tinted with blood. You may lose your mucus plug 2 weeks to 24 hours before labour starts.

**Weight loss**: you may lose 1 to 2lbs in the last two weeks of pregnancy.

Lower back pain is common.

Sometimes, Braxton-Hicks give you the impression that your labour has begun.

**Rupture of membranes**: your water may break. If so, advise your midwife! Labour will likely start very soon after.

**Braxton-Hicks contractions** bring blood flow to the placenta, and helps prepare the inferior part of the uterus for labour.

Sometimes, Braxton-Hicks give you the impression that your labour has begun.

## Latent phase & early labour contractions

When your cervix dilates from 0 to 4 cm

Lower back pain, diarrhea, abdominal cramping.

Bloody show

Your water may break!

With back labour, you might only feel lower back discomfort/pain.

### How you might be feeling...

Tired of pregnancy, impatient and ready for labour to start. Staying active seems to get things going.

A surge of energy, excitement!

Nesting, getting your space ready for birthing.

Shivers and tremors.

## TIPS:

It isn't uncommon for labour to start at the end of the day. If you're excited, use that energy! but try to rest often. You can even try to get some shut eye if you're tired.

Follow your hunger cues. It's better to eat up now to give your body some strength for later on. Red raspberry leaf tea is a great drink to have!

You can get some last minute stuff done for baby's arrival with the help of a close one. Make sure your bags are ready for the birthing center/hospital.

Go ahead and plan some fun/relaxing activities for these last few days/weeks.

How to know when it's the real deal: Walk around or take a hot shower. These are tried-and-tested ways to get out of latency and into real labour. The difference with real labour is that contractions become more frequent, stronger, and last longer, and cause the cervix to dilate and efface.

# Active labour

## What's going on in your body?

Your cervix will dilate from 4 to 8 cm.

Contractions last anywhere from 45 to 60 seconds, usually 5 min apart (or less). They will be getting longer, stronger and closer together

There will probably be more bloody show, and your membranes may rupture. If this happens, amniotic liquid will leak or gush.

## How you might be feeling...

As labour progresses and becomes more intense, you might feel the need to turn inwards.

It will become harder and harder to connect with those around you.

You may find it hard to deal with back/leg pain.

**'I'm letting go and trusting my body. My baby and I know exactly what to do.'**

### TIPS:

Take deep breaths, in and out. Inhale, exhale. Deep breathing will truly help your body handle labour.

Massages and hugs from loved-ones can also help.

Walk around! Do hip rotations, hang on to someone for support during a contraction if you have to. You can try different positions, change position as much as you need to.

Visualize 'opening'. Surrender and let your body make way for your baby.

Keep your bladder empty. Munch on some ice, drink water, and use a wet facecloth on your forehead, neck or back. You can take a bath or a hot shower.

Stay in the moment, take on only one contraction at a time; that's the only one that matters, and when it ends, it's gone forever. You can do this!

# Transition

## What's going on in your body?

Your cervix will dilate from 8 to 10 cm.

There'll be 10-20 very strong contractions, lasting anywhere from 60 to 90 seconds and can be really close together.

You'll be hot and sweaty. You may get leg cramps. Tremors and shakes are common. You may also throw up.

You may actually even fall asleep during contractions!

## How you might be feeling...

You may be restless, and believe that you can't take any more of this. This means it's almost done!

### TIPS:

Stay in the present moment. Make eye contact with your loved-one.

Visualize your body opening up, bringing your baby to you.

Try as best you can to breath softly.

Remember, during labour you don't owe anything to anyone. Everybody in your birthing space should be assisting you as you wish during contractions, and not disturb you.

You have the right to express yourself fully in any way that comes to you in the moment: verbally, by making noises, with words, by moving around, by singing...

Ride each contraction like a wave. Do not try to swim against it, let yourself get taken away by it, trusting it will bring you safely to shore.



## The 2nd stage of labour

### What's going on in your body?

Your cervix is fully dilated.

Your baby is coming down now. You will feel powerful internal pressure on your rectum.

Contractions will still be strong, but they may be spaced out more.

This stage can last anywhere between 30 min to 2 hours.

### How you might be feeling...

You might feel the urge to push, and/or the need to pass stool.

Knowing that your baby is on his way may give you a boost of energy!

As your baby is crowning, you will feel a burning or stinging sensation.

Don't push too hard. Breathe, pant and blow.

### TIPS:

Softly massage the perineum in between contractions.

When pushing, get into a comfortable position (on all fours, squatting, half-sitting) and don't hesitate to change positions if you feel the need.

Try getting 2-3 good pushes per contractions. Push as long as you feel the need to.

Let the strong contractions guide you. You may need some guidance during this stage.

Remember that baby will descend, go back up, and so forth, until he is born.