

# Prepare for Labor



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# Getting Ready for Labor

## Baby's Information

Baby's Doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

## Birth Plan

You will get to create a birth plan that outlines your wishes. What would you like to focus on?

- Natural labor
- Breathing and relaxation
- IV pain medicine
- Epidural
- Skin to skin
- First bath or delayed bath
- Golden hour: hour after birth with no interruptions
- Mirror for delivery
- Who will cut the cord? \_\_\_\_\_
- Formula or breast milk?
- Who is part of your support team? \_\_\_\_\_

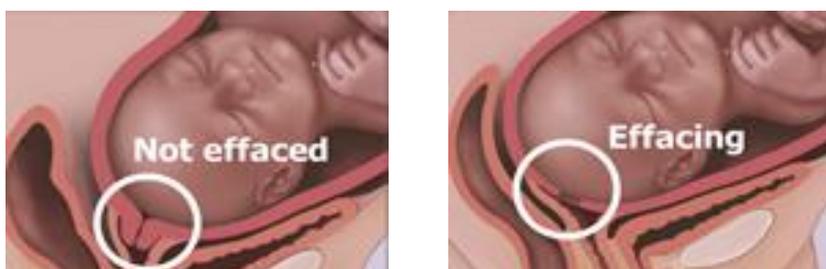
## What happens during labor?

Your cervix will thin and open during labor. The baby's head will also move down into your pelvis.

**Dilation** describes how wide the cervix is and is measured in centimeters (cm).



**Effacement** is a measure of how thin the cervix is. It is measured in percentage (%).



**Station** describes how far the baby's head has moved down, or descended, into your pelvis.



**This baby is at 0 station.**

# The Stages of Labor

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## Stage 1



Stage 1 happens when you start to feel regular contractions.

- This makes the cervix open (dilate), soften, shorten, and thin (effacement).
- This lets the baby move into the birth canal.
- The first stage is the longest of the 3 stages. You will learn more about stage 1 on the next page.

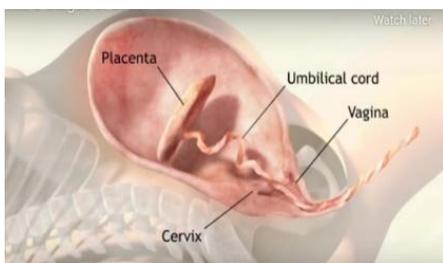
## Stage 2



Stage 2 is the most work for you.

- Your cervix is fully open (dilated), and you are ready for childbirth.
- You will start to push baby out.
- Stage 2 can be as short as 20 minutes or as long as a few hours. It may be longer if this is your first childbirth or if you have an epidural.
- Stage 2 ends when baby is born.

## Stage 3



Stage 3 begins after the baby is born and ends when the placenta leaves through the vagina.

- This stage is sometimes called delivery of the "afterbirth" and is the shortest stage of labor.
- It can last up to 20 minutes.

## Stage 4



Stage 4 happens 1 or 2 hours after delivery.

- Your uterus contracts again and gets rid of anything left from birth. These contractions can happen more quickly with breastfeeding.
- Skin to skin contact and breastfeeding begins during stage 4.

# Stage 1

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It is important to remember that labor is different for everyone. The first stage of labor is made up of **latent (early) labor**, **active labor**, and **transition**.

## Latent Labor

Latent labor is a time of slow change. It is usually best to stay home and try to rest during this time if you and baby are healthy and doing well. It can lower your risk of a c-section (Cesarean) delivery if you can safely stay home until you are in active labor. Early labor can last:

- More than 12 hours.
- Until you are dilated about 6 cm.

## Active Labor

During active labor your contractions are strong and get longer and closer together.

- This is a good time to start your breathing techniques and try a few relaxation exercises between contractions.
- You should switch positions often during this time. You may want to try to walk or take a warm bath.
- Drink a lot of water during active labor.
- Active labor:
  - Can last more than 5 hours.
  - Lasts until you are dilated about 8 cm.
  - Is usually the time to go to the hospital or birth center.

## Transition

You may need your support person a lot during transition. This can be the most challenging phase, but it is also the shortest. Try to think about “one contraction at a time.” Remind yourself of how far you have come, and when you feel an urge to push, tell the doctor or provider. Transition can last:

- Up to 2 hours.
- Until you are dilated to 10 cm, or fully dilated.

## How do I know if I am really in labor?

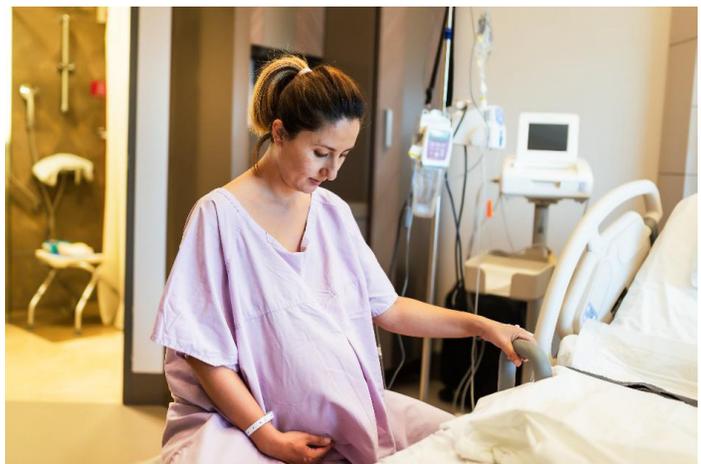
True Contractions	Warm-Up Contractions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tighten the entire uterus</li><li>• Get closer together</li><li>• Usually cause pressure on the low back and lower belly</li><li>• Last longer overtime</li><li>• Do not stop when you change what you are doing<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- A walk may make them stronger</li></ul></li><li>• Get stronger over time</li><li>• Cause the cervix to thin and open</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tighten parts of the uterus</li><li>• Have no regular pattern</li><li>• Do not usually cause back pressure</li><li>• Ease up overtime</li><li>• May stop when you change what you are doing<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- A rest, walk, or a warm bath may make them stop</li></ul></li><li>• Get weaker over time</li><li>• Do not cause the cervix to change</li></ul>

# I am in Labor

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## What can I do to feel more comfortable during labor on my own?

- Rest, if you can.
- Drink lots of water, and eat healthful foods such as fresh vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and lean proteins.
- Practice slow breathing:
  1. Take a big breath as soon as the contraction begins.
  2. Release all tension and go limp from head to toe as you exhale.
  3. Slowly inhale through your nose.
  4. Exhale through your mouth and let all your air flow out with a sigh.
  5. Wait until it feels like the air “wants” to come in again.
  6. Focus on relaxing a different part of your body every time you exhale.
- Mediate or visualize (pictures in your mind that help keep you calm):
  - Focus on a specific object or focal point that can help you through each contraction. You can choose a spot on the wall or bring something with you to focus on during a contraction.
  - Picture a place that makes you feel calm and relaxed.
  - Picture the opening process of labor and what is happening to your body.
  - Focus on the lighting, sound, smell, and temperatures in your room. How can you make it more comfortable for yourself?
- Sit in a warm tub. This can relieve pressure on the hips and back. This is called hydrotherapy.
- Use heat or cold packs on your low back. Use for 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off.
- Try a different labor position:
  - Side-lying, forward leaning, sitting, hands and knees, squatting, lunging, or slow dancing.
  - Pelvic rock to help baby turn and reduce back pain a pressure.
    1. Move to on your hands and knees.
    2. Arch your back up to the ceiling while taking a deep breath in.
    3. Relax your back, lower your belly, and release the breath.
- Try to walk:
  - Helps baby move down and turn to a good position for birth.
  - Makes better contractions and lessens the pain.
- Try sitting on a fitness or peanut ball.



## How can someone else help me feel more comfortable during labor?

- Have a good labor support team. Pick people that make you feel comfortable.
- Massage can help you relax and bring oxygen to your muscles.
- Counter-pressure:
  - Have someone else use the heel of their hand to put **steady, strong pressure on one spot on your lower back during contractions.**
- Double hip squeeze:
  - Have someone else use their hands to put **pressure on the side of each of your hips during a contraction.**



## When should I go to the hospital?

**Follow your doctor or midwife's directions.** Usually, you should go to the hospital if you:

- Notice any decreased fetal movement (baby is moving less).
- Have contractions that are 5 minutes apart, last for 1 minute, and have been this way for 1 hour (5-1-1).
- Vomit with contractions.
- Feel rectal pressure.
- Are not able to walk or talk during contractions.
- Think your bag of water has broken. This may feel like a small trickle or a giant gush.
- Have vaginal bleeding.
- Have contractions and tested positive for Group B Strep (called GBS positive).
- Have contractions and live far from the hospital.
- Have contractions and they are getting stronger and closer together.
- Have previously had a c-section (cesarean) delivery and are planning to try to delivery vaginally.

