



PARTNERS IN WOMEN'S HEALTH

Signs and Symptoms of Labor

Labor is the onset of regular, progressive contractions until the birth of your baby. During labor, the cervix dilates and thins out to allow for passage of the baby.

- False labor is common at the end of pregnancy. The contractions will be irregular and may or may not be associated with pain. They will go away after time.
- True Labor is usually painful and contractions occur every ten minutes or less at regular intervals. Initially they are mild and feel much like menstrual cramps. Pelvic pressure and low back pain are common associated symptoms.
- Watch for progression of contractions to shorter intervals. Call the office or answering service when the contractions are 5 minutes or less apart and lasting 45-60 seconds for at least an hour.
- Be patient because every labor is different. The average labor for a first baby lasts 12-24 hours. You will be most comfortable if you spend the early part of labor at home.
- Your water may break. This is a leakage of fluid that you cannot control from the vagina. Call the office if this occurs even if there is no pain or contractions associated with it.
- Bloody show is normal during labor and is bloody mucous drainage from the vagina usually associated with contractions but may occur even if you had a recent pelvic exam or intercourse. Call the office if the bleeding is heavier than a menstrual period.
- You may have nausea or a loss of appetite during labor. Drink fluids to keep hydrated and eat lightly if desired.
- Passage of the mucous plug is common after the cervix dilates slightly but by itself is not a sign of labor.
- When you call tell us your name, date of birth, your due date or how many weeks you are, length of contractions, interval between contractions, any high risk factors, how many babies you have had already.