

# Early Labor Stages & Characteristics



## Pre-Labor

Contractions	You May Feel	Normal Symptoms	Ways To Cope
Mostly Braxton Hicks. Inconsistent. 15s - 60s in length.	Excited. Anxious. Restless. The urge to nest. Frustrated things are not "progressing."	Contractions start & stop. Loose Stools. Cramping.	Take a walk. Stock nursing station. organize nursery. Go about your life as usual.

**\*Stay hydrated and eat well. Don't over exert yourself. Pre-labor can last days or sometimes weeks.\***

## Early Labor

Contractions	You May Feel	Normal Symptoms	Ways To Cope
Inconsistent. Between 3 & 30 mins apart. 15s - 60s long. Not increasing in intensity.	Confused. Antsy. Difficulty focusing. The desire to head to the hospital *(too early)*	Lower abdominal cramps. Dull low back ache. Diarrhea. Loss of mucus plug. Pink tinged mucus.	Take a walk. Rest/try to sleep. Watch a movie. Time contractions periodically. Make sure you bag is packed and ready.

**\*Call your midwife or OB and Doula/support person and let them know whats going on.\***

## Established Labor

Contractions	You May Feel	Normal Symptoms	Ways To Cope
Consistent 2-5 mins apart. 60-90 seconds long. Increasing in strength.	Excited. Surprised by the intensity of contractions. Need to focus/breathe through surges. Talking decreases as surges progress.	Waters may release. Bloody mucus or "show." Nausea. Vaginal Pressure.	Try different positions. Stay moving if possible. Breathing techniques. Bath or shower.

**It's time to go to the hospital**

**Contractions 4 minutes apart - 1 minute long - and that have been consistent for 1 hour**

# Pre-Term Labor

**Preterm labor occurs when regular contractions result in the opening of your cervix after week 20 and before week 37 of pregnancy.**

Preterm labor can result in premature birth. The earlier premature birth happens, the greater the health risks for your baby. Many premature babies (preemies) need special care in the neonatal intensive care unit. Preemies can also have long-term mental and physical disabilities.

The specific cause of preterm labor often isn't clear. Certain risk factors might increase the risk, but preterm labor can also occur in pregnant women with no known risk factors. It is important for all pregnant women to understand the signs and symptoms of preterm labor and the next steps.

## **Signs and symptoms of preterm labor include:**

- Regular or frequent sensations of abdominal tightening (contractions)
- Constant low, dull backache
- A sensation of pelvic or lower abdominal pressure
- Mild abdominal cramps
- Vaginal spotting or light bleeding
- Preterm rupture of membranes — in a gush or a continuous trickle of fluid after the membrane around the baby breaks or tears
- A change in the type of vaginal discharge — watery, mucus-like, or bloody

## **When to see a doctor**

If you experience these signs or symptoms before the 37th week of pregnancy or you're concerned about what you're feeling, contact your health care provider right away. Don't worry about mistaking false labor for the real thing. Everyone will be happy if it's a false alarm.

**If you have ANY concerns or worries about your or your baby's health during your pregnancy, don't be afraid to call your Dr! Trust your instincts.**

Family Dr. : \_\_\_\_\_

OB/GYN or Midwife: \_\_\_\_\_

Health Link/Public Health: \_\_\_\_\_