

STAGES OF Labor



	SIGNS	CONTRACTIONS	BEHAVIOR	EMOTIONS	WHAT TO DO
<i>early</i>	Bloody show, diarrhea, or menstrual-like cramps. May experience Braxton Hicks contractions or just "feel off".	Random and infrequent. 10-15 minutes apart lasting 30-60 seconds. Pattern may change, but contractions do not stop regardless of activity level.	Excitable, talkative, "nesting" energy. Can talk through contractions. May wonder if this is "really it".	Confused, excited, hopeful, fearful, frustrated, anxious. May feel eager to get "started" or feel restless.	Stay busy and ignore this phase as long as possible. Try not to get too excited or pay too much attention to each contraction. Eat a healthy meal and get some rest.
<i>early/active</i>	Beginning to settle into a routine. Usually still and quiet during contractions, but still active and talkative in between.	Approximately 5-10 minutes apart, lasting 60 seconds, and continuing to progress. May feel low back pain.	Moving around to find comfortable positions, losing modesty. Less jovial or excited now.	Accepting that "this is it". May have moments of self-doubt or worry or need help to accept that labor is uncontrollable.	Find a routine and focus on each contraction as it comes. Move around and stay active. Fresh air may be refreshing.
<i>active</i>	More serious and quiet. May not be as talkative. May vocalize during contractions. May be irritable if disturbed.	Every 2-5 minutes, lasting 60-90 seconds. Very intense and may come quickly.	Concentrated and focused. Movements become slow and deliberate. Continuing to lose modesty.	May make an emotional shift ("settling in"). May feel serious, instinctual, and only focused on coping with contractions.	Try to release any fears or need to control the situation. Allow yourself to turn inwards and focus on your routine.
<i>transition</i>	May shake, feel nauseous, or vomit. May cycle between feeling too hot or too cold.	May space out, stop completely, come back-to-back, or may not change at all.	May act irrational, frantic, or move around a lot. Might yell, cry, or be unable to relax, or say "I can't do this anymore".	Scared, overwhelmed, or panicked. You may feel like you want to give up or like labor will never end.	Focus on one contraction at a time and rest or sleep in between them. Lean on your support people for help to stay calm.
<i>pushing</i>	A powerful urge to bear down and push. May become talkative between contractions again.	Contractions become expulsive and feel more productive. They may space out (resting phase).	Confused if contractions slow down, grateful for a break, excited that the end is near.	May feel refreshed, optimistic, and more present ("second wind" of energy).	Rest if contractions slow. Wait until you feel the urge to push. Try lots of positions and push slowly to help prevent tearing.
<i>third stage</i>	A small gush of blood indicates the placenta has detached and is ready to deliver.	Contractions continue, but are much less noticeable and painful.	Focused on the baby, irritated with the fuss of the placenta, may need time to rest.	Relief that labor is over, elation and joy over your new baby, euphoria, exhaustion, shock.	Listen to your doctor's instructions to deliver the placenta and discuss any repairs that are required.