

Warm Up Labor

Possible Signs of Approaching Labor:

- Bloody show
- Contractions coming regularly (20 minutes or less and not stopping with rest or movement for hour or more)
- Spontaneous rupture of membranes (SROM) - labor typically does not start this way though.



Early Labor

- Contractions start to become more regular, last longer, are more intense and closer together. Laborer is likely starting to use comfort measures, but still able to talk in between contractions and be sociable.
- Cervix begins dilating, up to 5cm.
- Midwife will usually join when contractions have reached a consistent pattern, occurring every 4-5 minutes, lasting a minute long, and been that way for at least an hour.



Active Labor

- Cervix dilates from 5-8cm.
- Birthing parent begins to go inward, becomes less sociable and needs to focus during each contraction.
- They may feel fearful as contractions become much more intense and frequent with less rest time in between. They will likely need calm and reassurance.
- Baby is descending lower into the pelvis.



Birth

- The baby's head will stop going back up in between pushing, and the birther will probably experience the "ring of fire" sensation as the baby's head is crowning and about to be birthed.
- They may wish to feel the baby's head as it emerges, which also supports the perineum and can prevent tearing.
- As the rest of the baby is born, they may wish to reach down and pull baby up.



Transition

- Cervix becomes fully dilated during this time.
- Birthing person is in deep concentration, and often instinctively knows what position they need to be in.
- Coping becomes very difficult, allowing them to feel their emotions will help them be more likely to surrender, and be more loose and relaxed.



Pushing

- Often between transition and pushing, contractions will become temporarily less frequent. This is a good opportunity for the birthing person to rest and regroup.
- They should breathe deeply and push when they feel the urge to push.
- It is normal for the baby to come down and go back up between pushes.
- Fetal heart tones should continue to be assessed frequently.



Laboring person is probably feeling really excited at this point. This early stage of labor, can often last quite long, especially for multiparous people. Getting rest, even if feeling energetic, will help the laboring person conserve energy for the rest of labor.

Birthing person and baby's vitals should be monitored closely during this time to ensure their safety. The birthing person should stay hydrated and eat if they want in order to keep their energy up, as well as using the bathroom as needed. Most importantly, the laborer should be left undisturbed as much as possible.

Labor Flow Chart