

WHEN TO CALL IN LABOUR

First Baby

- 4-1-1 rule:
 - When your contractions are 4 minutes apart, from the start of one contraction, to the start of the next one.
 - When each contractions lasts 60 seconds long. (1 minute)
 - When this pattern has been going on for one full hour.

Note: The 4-1-1 rule is a guide that fits most women's labour patterns. At this point in your labour we are expecting you to be dilated to 3-4 cm, which is the beginning of active labour. Your midwife will explain in more detail why it's important to wait until your labour is "active" before your midwives attend you in labour.

Not First Baby

- Your midwife will go over a more specific plan of when to call the pager when it is not your first baby, as your labour will likely progress quicker than your first baby.

OR ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:

- Water breaks (Rupture of Membranes)
- Significant Vaginal Bleeding (bloody show is normal)
- Decreased Baby Movements (should be able to get 6 movements in 2 hours)
- Any other concerns

EARLY LABOUR MANAGEMENT

Early labour can last a very long time (approx. 24 hours) especially if it is your first baby, or may be much shorter (a few hours). Early labour is made up of a few characteristics:

- Contractions that are irregular in their pattern of frequency
 - ie. 10 min, 7 min, 9 min, 3 min, 20 min.
- Contractions that are irregular in their strength and length
 - ie. Strong contraction lasting 55 seconds, followed by a less intense contraction lasting 25 seconds.
- Contractions that vary significantly depending on your activity level
 - ie. Frequent and strong when standing, milder and less frequent when laying down.

What is going on in early labour?

- Your cervix is starting to change or 'ripen'. It is opening, thinning out and moving forward.
- If it is your first baby, your cervix thins out before it opens up.
- If it is not your first baby, your cervix will thin out and open up at the same time, thus usually the early labour is not as long.
- Cervical change in this stage is from 0-3 cm dilated or open, and thinning from approximately 4 cm long to a few millimeters.

What will I see?

- Increased discharge with mucous
 - This is due to losing your mucous plug, a substance that is in the cervical opening that comes out as the cervix opens. Not everyone notices their mucous plug coming out. Some people lose it a week or two before they go into labour.
- Bloody Show
 - You may notice some pink discharge, or even bright red. As the cervix opens up the blood vessels within it break and cause a bit of bleeding. Bloody show ranges from spotting to light period like bleeding. If you are having heavy period like bleeding, passing clots, or bright red watery blood, page your midwife immediately.

What should I do?

- REST!

- Early labour often starts at night. It is in your best interest to rest as much as you can and try to get as much sleep as possible, as it may last a long time.
- TYLENOL & GRAVOL
 - If you do not have any allergies to these medications, they are a great way to help you cope with early labour and allow you to rest through some of the mild contractions. Your midwife will instruct you on frequency and doses of each.
- Warm Bath
 - As long as your water has not broken yet, a warm bath is a great way to relax in early labour. The warm water will either help space out your contractions so to give you more rest before active labour starts, or it will pick them up into an active labour pattern more quickly.
- Hydrate and Eat
 - Your body is working hard, and often with the discomfort, people don't feel like eating much. Frequent small snacks are important to fuel your body with the energy it needs for labour.
 - Hydration is so important. If your body is dehydrated it may affect your labour progress. Continue to sip water, juice, and electrolyte drinks like Gatorade throughout early labour.
- Stay Positive
 - You have waited a long time for this day, and it is finally happening, your baby is coming! But labour takes time, and your body needs to go through each stage in order to bring your baby safely into the world. This is a good time to read positive affirmations, look at pictures of your baby's ultrasound, and be with your partner or loved one who can encourage you when the night feels long.