

# Know the Signs of Labor

Learn the signs of labor so that you know when to call your doctor and go to the hospital for delivery.

## Mucus plug

Some women have a release of cervical mucus that may have a slight pink color, or blood-tinged. This is called **passing a mucus plug or a bloody show**. This may be a sign that your body is preparing for delivery, but you do not need to call your health care provider.

## Rupture of membranes (water breaks)

Rupture of membranes is the medical term for your water breaking. This is your amniotic fluid. It can be a gush or a slow trickle and should be a clear, slightly yellow color.

Often, a woman will go into labor soon after her water breaks. If this doesn't happen, your health care provider may talk with you about helping your labor along with medicine.

If you think your water has broken, call your doctor and go to the hospital. Do not take a bath or put anything into your vagina. You may wear a pad.

## Contractions

Contractions are the tightening and relaxing of muscles in the uterus. When labor starts, these muscles tighten and relax at a regular pace. They will get closer together and stronger, letting your body know that your baby is about to be born.

Sometimes, these muscle contractions are not regular, and they start and stop. They do not seem to get stronger and closer together, but stay about the same intensity. Your health care provider may describe these contractions as Braxton-Hicks or signs of false labor. These contractions are normal but can be uncomfortable.

## False Labor Contractions

- Contractions are not regular
- Contractions stay about the same
- Contractions go away while resting

## True Labor Contractions

- Contractions happen at regular times apart
- Contractions get stronger and closer together
- Contractions keep going while lying down

If you can no longer walk or talk through contractions, call your health care provider.

## 5-1-1 Rule

If contractions are happening every 5 minutes for the past hour and are at least 1 minute long, then you should go to the hospital.

### **You may need to go sooner than ‘5-1-1.’ Call your doctor or midwife if you:**

- Vomit with contractions
- Feel rectal pressure
- Are unable to walk or talk through contractions
- Think your water has broken
- Have vaginal bleeding
- Tested positive for Group B Strep and need time to get antibiotics at the hospital
- Progress quickly (Call 911 and get into a side-lying position if you are having an extremely fast labor!)

### **Before 37 Weeks**

If you are having regular contractions (4 to 6 in one hour) before 37 weeks of pregnancy, call your health care provider right away.

**Talk to your doctor or midwife if you have any questions or concerns. Your doctor or midwife may give you different instructions.**