

SIGNS OF ACTIVE LABOR

You can call us anytime, even if you are unsure that you are in labor, if you feel the need for support or information.

If you feel that your waters have opened or you have having contractions every 5 minutes you should call us to come. Oftentimes women will have copious amounts of discharge - this is normal towards the end of pregnancy as well as early labor. This will be different in that it is not running freely down your leg, but is more thick and usually appears when you wipe.

Labor can begin one of several ways in different women:

Bloody Show

You may first notice some blood-tinged, pinkish mucous from your cervix as it begins to open. You may also pass the mucous plug from your cervix. Even if you have not felt any contractions yet, this can be a sign that labor may be beginning. If this begins happening before 36 weeks of pregnancy, please call us immediately or go to the hospital.

Uterine Contractions

You will probably notice in the last weeks before your baby is born that you will have periods of irregular, uncomfortable contractions, often with lower back pain. Sometimes these contractions come every 10-20 minutes or as close as every 5 minutes. Rest will generally soothe these " warm-up" contractions. The contractions of labor, on the other hand, will come at more regular intervals with increasing intensity and frequency. You may want to have us come and do a labor check. Remember to relax and breathe deeply during your contractions.

Membranes Open

Sometimes the first sign of labor is when the bag of waters ruptures or " opens" Sometimes you will find that amniotic fluid gushes out all at once, or sometimes it will be just a small amount of water. If this happens or you are not sure, you should let us know right away and we can help you to determine what has happened.

It is important to practice good hygiene if this does happen to prevent infection. This includes: put absolutely nothing in your vagina, no sex, no baths - only showers, special care after using the restroom to clean front to back, and wear cotton underwear.

Arizona state law requires that you be in labor by 24 hours after your membranes open. This is because there is an increased risk of infection. If 24 hours arrive and you aren' t close to being in labor, you will have to go to the hospital and most likely will receive IV antibiotics.

HOW TO COPE WITH LABOR

Giving birth is something that only you, the expectant mother, can do; yet it need not be something you do alone. Most women wish to have support persons with them during labor and birth. We encourage this as we have seen the tremendous support women receive from their loved ones.

Choose someone who is strong and capable, and who thinks of YOU as being a strong and capable woman. You should feel good about yourself and your decision to birth at home. You should take your support person(s) to childbirth classes with you so that they, also, view birth as a normal, natural process. This will empower him or her to be more able to help you as you pass through labor.

You should be well rested and well nourished to cope better with the work of labor. Early labor can last a day or more for a first time mother. During this early labor, eat light, nutritious meals, drink plenty of fluids, and rest so that you will have energy later on.

Urinate frequently. A full bladder will make you uncomfortable. Do something to distract yourself from your surges: Take a walk (not long, strenuous ones because these may cause you to be tired), listen to music or watch movies, talk with friends, or take a long bath.

When labor is active (you are 3-4 cm dilated and surges are more frequent and steady), alternate walking and resting. Change positions to find which is the most comfortable - squatting, kneeling on all fours, sitting, lying on your left side, or walking. Breathe deeply and relax your face, shoulders, or any other area that feels tense.

If you have back pain, firm pressure or massage really helps. A hot shower against your back can help. Imagine your cervix opening like a flower, or imagine that each surge is a massage for the baby.

Take one surge at a time. You CAN deal with one more! Communicate with those who are helping you. Let them know what you need and allow them to respond to you.

During active labor we will be listening to your baby's heartbeat and taking your blood pressure frequently. We will also be doing occasional vaginal exams to determine baby's position as well as how open your cervix is.

Just before you are completely open, you may notice some changes. You may vomit, tremble, and feel very hot or very cold. As the baby moves down against your rectum, you will feel as if you want to have a bowel movement. You might feel very sleepy and may be able to sleep for a minute or two between surges (Really! This is the body's own pain medicine). Remind yourself: I CAN do it, I AM doing it! It is happening, and I WILL allow it to happen!

**THE FIRST STAGE OF LABOR IS ENDING
AND SOON YOU WILL BEGIN TO PUSH**