

## The Stages of Labor

### Pre-labor

You experience practice, braxton-hicks contractions. Your cervix is softening (effacement) and opening (dilation). You may have some bloody show (mucous plug).

Pre-labor is important because it strengthens the uterus and prepares the mother and baby for birth.

### Early first stage- Excitement "Maybe this is it..."

Contractions are 10 minutes apart or less and last 45-60 seconds.  
Contractions become progressively stronger and closer together.

You may experience bloody show, runny nose, hunger, thirst, and diarrhea. Keep busy... eat, drink, walk, shower and rest. Have someone with you.  
If labor stops, don't get discouraged rest eat and go on.  
Make sure that your bags are packed and that you know the fastest way to the hospital.

### Active first stage- Acceptance "This is a lot of work but, I can do it."

Contractions are becoming stronger and more frequent- five minutes apart or less and lasting around 60 seconds.

You should try walking, standing, sitting, squatting, pelvic rocking, showering, lying on your side... Avoid lying on your back!  
If you go to the hospital and you are less than 5 cm dilated and are not yet showing late labor signs you should consider going back home.

### Late first stage- Seriousness "Do not disturb."

Contractions are intense; close together and sometimes one on top of another. They may last 60 seconds or more.

Loss of modesty and appetite, no longer talkative... is all normal.  
You should drink and go to the bathroom often.  
Surrender and allow labor to take over.

#### Mother's checklist

- do not move during a contraction
- abdominal breathing
- relaxation
- face relaxed

#### Partner's checklist

- check her position
- check her relaxation
- rub her back
- guide her breathing
- talk to her
- time contractions

Coach needs to be your advocate!! Be positive, encouraging, polite to staff and a relaxation expert. Make sure the room is comfortable- temperature, lighting, amount of people...

### **Transition- Self Doubt "I can't do this anymore!"**

Contractions may become irregular, may double peak, may stop.

You may be sweaty, shaky, hot then cold, confused, unsure, scared, nervous...you might forget that you are having a baby.

You might burp, vomit, complain...

"You did this to me!", "I can't take it anymore!", and "I give up!"

She needs to be encouraged...the stronger the contraction, the sooner you will be holding your baby!!!

It is important to stay calm, positive, remember this is normal. Stand up, change positions... take one contraction at a time. Avoid drugs because the hardest part is almost over.

### **Second Stage- Calmness and determination "I want to hold my baby!"**

Contractions are spaced out and you will most likely have the urge to push.

You may be very tired and might sleep between contractions.

Your bag of waters might break during a contraction.

You are determined and calm.

It is important to find the most comfortable position... side position, squatting position, assisted squatting position, hands and knees position, standing...

Try keeping your knees back- this opens the legs without putting too much stress on the perineum.

Put your chin to your chest- this traps a cushion of air between the abdomen and the uterus which keeps the baby in the proper alignment with the pelvis making each push more effective.

When pushing, hold your breath as long as comfortable. Tune into your body, open up and push down and out.

You deliver your baby the midwife or doctor catches the baby.

Hold your baby skin to skin and start breastfeeding as soon as baby seems interested.

Breastfeeding helps your uterus contract so you can deliver the placenta.

### **Third Stage**

Coach cuts the cord.

You deliver the placenta usually within 5-45 minutes.

**HAPPY BIRTH DAY!!!!**