

# Labor Instructions

Once you are 37 weeks pregnant you are considered full term. There are many changes that your body will be going through as it prepares for the birth of your baby.

## **NORMAL CHANGES:**

- Increased pressure in your pelvis
- Increased vaginal discharge: this may be white, yellow, brown or even blood tinged
- Increase in the intensity and frequency of contractions (your belly feels hard and tight)
- Back pain that may come and go or remain constant
- Feeling more tired and having more difficulty sleeping

## **SIGNS OF LABOR:**

- Contractions are becoming more regular and stay regular
- Increased bloody discharge
- Leaking fluid: it may be clear or colored, but is usually the consistency of water

\*\*\*Sometimes if you take a warm bath, lay down, drink a big glass of water, and rest, your contractions will go away on their own. If they go away, you are not in labor.

## **CALL YOUR PROVIDER IF:**

- (1) Your contractions are regular and uncomfortable (you need to stop what you are doing and breathe through them) AND your contractions are every 5 minutes lasting 40-60 seconds for at least 2 hours\*
- (2) You are feeling constant leaking that appears watery
- (3) You are bleeding like a heavy period (soaking a pad)
- (4) You have constant, severe pain.

\*If this is not your first baby and you have had a fast labor in the past and/or were dilated in the office, you may want to call the provider on call after only 1 hour of uncomfortable, consistent contractions.

FOR YOUR COMFORT AND SAFETY, PLEASE ALWAYS CALL THE OFFICE OR ON CALL PROVIDER FIRST BEFORE GOING TO THE HOSPITAL.

**THE NUMBER TO CALL: 703-816-4152.** WAIT FOR THE INSTRUCTIONS AND LEAVE A MESSAGE.

WAIT FOR THE CALL BACK FROM YOUR PROVIDER AND LEAVE YOUR PHONE LINE OPEN SO THAT THE PROVIDER'S CALL CAN COME THROUGH.

This is an exciting time in your pregnancy and we are here for you every step of the way! So stay calm and enjoy!!

# How to Tell When Labor Begins

In the last weeks of pregnancy your uterus might start to cramp. These cramps may become uncomfortable or even painful as you get closer to your due date. These irregular cramps are called Braxton Hicks contractions or false labor. One good way to tell the difference is to time the contractions. Note how long it is from the start of one contraction to the start of the next one. Keep a record for an hour. It may be hard to time labor pains accurately if the contractions are slight.

Usually, you do not need to go to the hospital as soon as your contractions begin. Ask your health care provider when you should call him or her. While you wait at home, rest if you can. Some women may find it more comfortable to walk around or to take a shower or a warm bath.

Differences Between False Labor and True Labor		
Type of Change	False Labor	True Labor
Timing of Contractions	Often are irregular and do not get closer together (called Braxton Hicks contractions)	Come at regular intervals, and as time goes on, get closer together. Each lasts about 45-70 seconds.
Change with Movement	Contractions may stop when you walk or rest, or may even stop with a change of position	Contractions continue, despite movement.
Strength of Contractions	Usually weak and do not get much stronger (may be strong and then weak)	Increase in strength steadily
Pain of Contractions	Usually felt only in the front	Usually starts in the back and moves to the front

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