

Guide for Labor and Delivery

Late Pregnancy

1. Practice your exercises. (see exercise sheet) These will increase your muscle tone, contributing to a more comfortable labor and delivery.
2. Get plenty of rest. Nap each afternoon in the last few weeks of pregnancy. Don't overdo.
3. Have important phone numbers posted, get your supplies together, and finish any last minute tasks you "need" to get done.

Early labor Stage (Latent Stage 3-4 cm)

1. Call us when true labor begins or when otherwise indicated (talk to us about this if you need more information).
2. Don't start breathing until absolutely necessary, usually when you can no longer walk or talk through a contraction. Then do slow abdominal breathing.
3. Keep eating and drinking. Digestion slows down during labor, so change to light easier to digest foods, such as broth, juice, toast, yogurt, fruit, soup, pasta, and breads.
4. First time mothers especially take note. Go to bed, rest, and conserve your energy! Sleep at night, nap during the day. Most first-timers are usually excited and even a bit anxious at the start of labor. They often stay up and by the time the hard stuff comes, they are exhausted.
5. Thinning out of cervix, along with beginning dilation, takes place, slowly at first.
6. Time the contractions.
7. Contractions are mild, 5-10 minutes apart, lasting 30 seconds long.
8. Keep your bladder. Try to go to the bathroom every hour.
9. Try to find a comfortable position and keep relaxed.

Active Labor Stage (4-7 cm)

1. Change positions frequently. This will help to rotate baby to the proper position, and encourage equal dilation of the cervix. Walking feels good also.
2. Breathe slowly and deeply. Too rapid breathing will cause hyperventilation. Signs are dizziness and tingling in the hands and feet. Breathe into a paper bag or your cupped hands to counteract this.
3. Contractions are more intense with definite peaks. Usually 2-4 minutes long, lasting 60 seconds or more. Very hard work now. Encouragement is most important now. Remember "it's hard work, but good pay". Do not leave the mother alone during this stage. Company, support, and loving encouragement are most important at this time.
4. No pushing. Blow long and slow. Remember "the harder the pain the deeper the breath."
5. Back support may be necessary now. Warm compresses on the lower back, and pressure there feels good now. Forward leaning positions also help.
6. Remember each finished contraction is one less you have to deal with, and one step closer to the baby's birth. Don't get discouraged, the end is near.
7. Cool cloths on the face and sips of a cool drink are good now.
8. Keep your bladder empty. It may be hard to get up and go, but a full bladder will impede progress and make the contractions more painful.
9. Showers or tub soaks feel good now. They take the edge off the contractions, and help encourage relaxation.

Transition (8-10 cm)

1. Most intense part of labor, but the shortest.
2. Contractions 1-2 minutes apart, lasting 1-2 minutes, some double peaked.
3. Easy to “loose it”. Get eye contact and use simple direct commands, “look at me, you can do it”.
4. Doesn't want to be touched, gets crabby, irritable. May vomit, have the shakes one minute and the sweats the next. Remind her that these are all good signs, the end is near, “take courage”.

Second Stage (pushing)

1. The body is working the baby down the birth canal. There is usually a break, a pause, signaling the start of pushing. Contractions are slower, and not as strong (thank God)
2. Mom is chattier, talkative, encouraged, excited, and revitalized. Gets her second wind now.
3. Pelvic pressure increases, burning is felt, stretching increases, as baby descends in the birth canal.
4. Keep breathing deep, long, emptying out the lungs completely with each breath. This will put pressure on the uterus, and descend the baby gently. Keep all your noises deep. Throaty, grunty, like a weight-lifter.
5. Rest well between each contraction, so you will have strength to push effectively.
6. Warm compresses on the perineum feel good now and encourage relaxation and softening. Massaging with warm oil helps the perineum stretch.
7. Keep encouraged, reach down and touch your baby's head when you can reach it. You really are getting somewhere.
8. Panting as the head crowns, allows for a slow head delivery, and reduces the incidence of tearing.
9. Bring baby to breast as soon as you can. Nurse your new wee one.
10. Remember you have one more job to do!

Third Stage (birth of the placenta)

1. Usually 5-20 minutes after the birth of the baby. Signaled by a separation gush, and a few crampy contractions. Push as you did for the baby and “your work is all done”.
2. May need to change position. Squatting or a more upright position usually helps. Sometimes a light uterus or nipple massage encourages the contractions to come.

Remember each labor is different. Time doesn't matter, as long as you and the baby are doing well. You will not be pregnant forever. Babies always come.