

Hints to Help You With Labour and Birth

	What's Happening?	What Does it Feel Like (Physically)?	What You May Feel Like (Emotionally)	What Helps? (Partners Take Note!)
<p>Early Labour Usually the longest phase of labour as your cervix softens (ripens), begins shortening and dilates to 3 cm.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irregular pattern of contractions every 5-20 mins last 20-40 secs. • May have "show" • May have frequent soft bowel movements • Bag of waters may break (only happens in early labour with 12% of women) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May feel heaviness in lower abdomen like a period beginning • An achy back. • Contractions start in the back and move to the front. They will come like waves with a beginning, a peak and an end. • Breaks between contractions become shorter as the contractions become longer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excited • Anxious • Restless • Unable to concentrate • Relieved it's started • Talkative or Quiet! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact your caregiver • Call your partner • At the beginning do activities that distract you (walking, watch TV, read, share jokes) • If at night, rest and sleep between contractions • As contractions lengthen do relaxing activities (massage, music, apply warm compresses to your neck, back, or lower uterus) • Change positions • Sit, lean on an exercise ball • Take sips of water frequently • Eat light meals • Empty your bladder every 1-2 hours • Use slow, deep breathing when you need to focus • Use TENS

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<p>Active Labour Labour progress is faster now as your cervix shortens completely and dilates to 7-8 cm.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contractions have a definite pattern • Contractions are longer (45-70 secs), stronger, and closer together (up to 4 in 10 minutes) • The baby moves down farther into the pelvis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contractions have a definite rhythm are intense and may be painful: • You need to focus more • You are unwilling to change positions or talk during contractions • At times may feel tired • Less or no appetite 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quieter, more inward • A need to have your support person closer to you to help you stay focused during contractions • A need to “moan” using your voice with low deep sounds to soothe yourself 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use <u>slow deep breathing</u> and <u>light breathing</u> as needed • Take contractions one at a time • Use a focal point • Music/massage and dim the lights • Change positions • Sway or rock your hips, use a ritual or routine with contractions • Bounce on exercise ball • Take sips of water • Relax in bath or shower • Use cold packs on lower back • Relax/catnap between contractions • Continue to use TENS
<p>Transition Usually the shortest and the most intense part of labour as your cervix completes dilatation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four to five contractions in ten minutes with each contraction lasting 60-90 secs. • The bag of waters often break during this phase • The baby continues to move down – putting pressure on your rectal area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May burp, hiccup, feel nauseous, vomit, hyperventilate • Hot, sweaty and have shaky legs • Feel like you need to have a bowel movement – may grunt and feel like pushing • May have a slight increase in vaginal bleeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May express strange feelings: fear, panic, anger or become very quiet and inward • May feel overwhelmed and need to cry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember that this is the shortest part of labour and your baby will be here soon • Continue your routines that are helping • Add your <u>panting breath</u> with the urges to push • Have cool cloths placed on your forehead or neck • Need more help with focusing • If legs are shaky, massage may help

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<p>Birth Pushing the baby out of the pelvis and giving birth may take ½ hour to 3 hours (a shorter time is possible if you have birthed before)</p>	<p>Contractions may slow for a brief time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three contractions come in 10 minutes lasting 60 seconds approx. • Baby's head turns to find the best fit through the pelvis. • The perineum stretches as the baby's head comes through the vaginal opening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A "rest and be thankful" break at the beginning of pushing • May need to push 3 to 5 times with each contraction • Feel very hot/flushed • It is normal to pass a small amount of stool as you begin to push • Crowning of baby's head causes a stretching, tingling, burning sensation. These tissues then go numb as they continue to stretch • Great relief with birth of baby's head 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May feel very tired or motivated, energized (home stretch) • Working hard • More involved and aware of surroundings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember that your uterus does 80% of the work (largest muscle in your body!) • Push when you have the urge – use <u>pushing breathing</u> • Touch your baby's head and look in the mirror to help your pushing • Think of pushing your baby down, forward and out into the light • Choose positions like squatting that open the pelvic outlet and encourage gravity (your caregivers will help you) • Help your perineum to relax with warm compresses

Questions for my care provider...