

## Signs That Labor May Be Approaching

<b>The Sign</b>	<b>What it is</b>	<b>When it may happen</b>
Feeling as if the baby has dropped or is lower.	<b>Lightening</b> The baby's head is settling deep into your pelvis.	From a few weeks to a few hours before labor begins.
Having an increase in vaginal discharge. It may be a thick mucus or more watery. It may be clear, pink, or slightly blood tinged.	<b>Show</b> A thick plug of mucus has blocked the cervix during pregnancy. As the cervix begins to soften and open slightly, the plug slides out. It may be tinged with blood from small vessels in the cervix that are breaking.	For some women, show appears several days before labor begins. For other women, there is no show until they are in active labor.
A gush or continual trickle of watery fluid from the vagina.	<b>Rupture of membranes</b> The fluid filled sac that has surrounded the baby during pregnancy has broken open.	From several hours before labor begins to any time during labor.
Feeling a regular pattern of cramps, a backache, or a sensation like a band tightening around your middle.	<b>Contractions</b> Your uterine muscle is tightening and relaxing. These contractions may ease up and go away entirely after an hour or two. Or, they may become progressively closer and stronger.	<b>Lightening</b> The baby's head is settling deep into your pelvis

	<b>False Labor</b>	<b>True Labor</b>
Timing of contractions	Are often irregular and do not get any closer together.	Come at regular intervals. Will get closer together and stronger with time.
Activity	Contractions may ease up or stop all together with a change in activity. If you are lying down, get up and move around. If you	Contractions continue despite activity or rest.

	have been active, take a rest. A warm bath may help relieve discomforts.	
Location of contractions	Often felt all over the abdomen. May feel slightly crampy or just like tightening.	Usually felt in the back first and then pulling around towards the front. May also be felt as cramping very low in the abdomen.

**How to time your contractions:** When your contractions have progressed to the point where they are lasting 50-70 seconds and are strong enough that you must breathe through them, you should begin timing them. Time from the beginning of one contraction to the beginning of the next. When the contractions have been strong and every five minutes or less for AT LEAST an hour you can begin to get ready to go to the hospital.

Remember, in early labor, it is best for you to remain in your own environment where you can do things that comfort you. Take a warm bath or shower. Walk around. Rest some. Eat lightly. Drink plenty of fluids.

**Other signs:**

- Water breaking. If you are certain, go on to the hospital. If you are not certain, you may come to the office during regular hours or go to the hospital for evaluation.
- Vaginal bleeding. While bloody show (see above) is normal, bright red blood or a flow as heavy as a period is not. Go directly to the hospital.
- Constant pain. If you are having constant, severe abdominal pain, do not wait for a whole hour to pass. Go directly to the hospital.

If at any time you have questions or concerns, please call us. If you go to the hospital, they will notify us when you arrive.