

# Hints to Help You With Labour and Birth

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

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

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

## Questions for my care provider...