

Labor and Birth



Early Labor (5 to 24 hours)

Rest, eat, drink lightly.
Breathe slowly through
contractions and relax.

**Cervix opens 0 to 4
centimeters**



Active Labor (3 to 6 hours)

Change your position.
This may be taking a shower,
sitting in a chair or rocking
on your hands and knees.

**Cervix opens 4 to 8
centimeters**



Transition (10 to 60 minutes)

This is a very intense part of
labor but does not last very
long. You may need extra
support during this part of
labor. **Cervix opens 8 to 10
centimeters**



Pushing and Birth

(5 minutes to 3 hours) Push in
a comfortable position. Blow
or pant when your baby's
head is crowning. This helps to
prevent tears to your vagina
Your baby moves out of your
uterus, through your vagina
and out of your body



Birth of the Placenta

(5 to 30 minutes) Contractions
feel very mild. Your vagina may
be sore. You may feel shaky
and cold. **Your placenta
moves out of your uterus,
through your vagina and out
of your body.**



Early Labor Toolkit

What to do when labor starts

Signs before labor starts

- A small amount of light pink or brownish mucus from your vagina
- Your baby moves down into your pelvis. You may feel less pressure on your stomach and more pressure on your bladder.
- Diarrhea
- Cramps or mild contractions. These feel like when you get your period.
- Lower back pain

When to call or go to the hospital

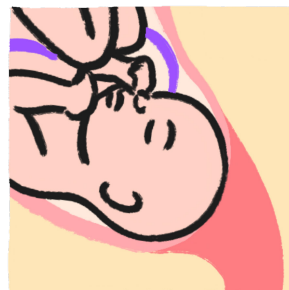
- Your bag of water breaks. Call even if you do not have contractions.
- You have regular, painful contractions: 4-5 minutes for an hour if it's your first baby, and 5-8 minutes for an hour if it's not your first baby.
- You have bleeding from your vagina
- Your baby is not moving as much as before



0% Effaced
0 cm Dilated



60% Effaced
2 cm Dilated



100% Effaced
5 cm Dilated



100% Effaced
10 cm Dilated



Early Labor Toolkit

What to do when labor starts

Distract Yourself

Stay active with things that make you feel comfortable.

Keep doing your regular activities until you need to pause.

If it's nighttime, try to rest.

Bake, fold laundry, watch a show, or listen to music.

Talk with your support people to stay relaxed and connected.

Set the Mood

Create a calm, soothing space.

Use soft lighting and quiet music.

Try calming scents like lavender (aromatherapy).

Keep Moving

Movement helps your body progress. Switch between walking and rest. Try:

The Miles Circuit or Spinning Babies techniques

Gentle dancing and breathing

Stretching, sitting, or leaning forward

Changing positions. Imagine a flashlight shining from your belly button and point it toward the ground.

Keep Energy Up

You'll need energy for the hours ahead.

Eat small meals or snacks.

Sip fluids often—water, juice, coconut water, or sports drinks.

Rest when you can, and sleep if possible—it's hard to rest later.

Breathe

Use your breath to stay calm and focused.

Box breathing: Inhale, hold, exhale, hold, counting to four each time

Five-finger breathing: Trace your hand with your finger while you breathe in and out.

Listen to guided birth meditations



Early Labor Toolkit

Relax

Help your body release tension.

Take a warm shower or bath.

Use warm or cold compresses.

Try gentle massages—light touch, hip squeezes, lower-back pressure, or a foot rub. You're in charge, so say what feels best to you.

Support Person: How You Can Help

Listen: Plans can change. Ask what feels good.

Encourage: Say kind words like "You're doing great."

Be the DJ (and dance partner): Help them move to music.

Offer comfort: Bring water, snacks, massage, and calm breathing.

Massage and pressure: Try hip squeezes or gentle back pressure.

Assist: Fill the tub, help them move or change positions, track contractions with an app.

Take care of yourself too: Eat, rest, and breathe—labor can be long, and they'll need your steady energy.

Be patient: Progress takes time.



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[How to Prepare for Labor and Birth](#)

[Get Ready for Labor: Self-Help Tips](#)

[Labor and Delivery Frequently Asked Questions](#)

