

CHANGES IN YOUR BODY

As your due date quickly approaches, you will notice many changes in your body. Here is a list of things that may happen before your labor starts.

- ❖ **Lightening** – feeling the baby drop. With your first baby, this usually occurs 2-3 days before your due date. After it occurs, you might experience frequent urination, pelvic pressure, or increased swelling or cramps in your legs, often in one leg more than the other.
- ❖ **Engagement** - when the baby settles into the pelvis (around 2-3 weeks before the due date in a woman with her first pregnancy).
- ❖ Vaginal secretions/discharge increase in amount.
- ❖ Loss of weight may occur.
- ❖ Loss of mucus plug.
- ❖ Bloody show may be noted.
- ❖ The cervix becomes soft and effaced (thin).
- ❖ Persistent backache is common.
- ❖ False labor pains happen at variable frequency.
- ❖ You may have an energy spurt 24-48 hours before the onset of labor.

DETERMINING START OF LABOR

The following is a list comparing symptoms of true and false labor.

TRUE LABOR

- ❖ Contractions occur at regular intervals.
- ❖ Contractions come more frequently.
- ❖ As labor proceeds, contractions increase in strength and duration.
- ❖ Contractions get stronger with walking.
- ❖ Bloody show appears.
- ❖ Cervix becomes effaced (thin) and dilated.
- ❖ Contractions usually felt radiating to uterus from the back.

FALSE LABOR

- ❖ Contractions occur at irregular intervals.
- ❖ Contractions are usually further apart.
- ❖ Contractions do not get stronger.
- ❖ Walking has no effect on false labor or sometimes relieves contractions.
- ❖ No bloody show.
- ❖ Cervix usually not effaced and is closed.
- ❖ Contractions usually felt in lower abdomen or groin.

True labor may start as contractions which are irregular and short in duration.

but then become regular with increasing frequency, duration and intensity.

DECISIONS THAT SHOULD ALREADY BE MADE

- ❖ How will you get to the hospital ?
- ❖ Who will look after your other children while you're in the hospital ?
- ❖ How are you going to feed your baby -- Breast or Bottle ?
- ❖ Do you desire a circumcision for your baby if a boy ?
- ❖ Who will be your pediatrician ?
- ❖ What will be your plan for birth control after the birth of your baby?

HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS

Things you can do at home in early labor:

- * Soak in a tub of warm water that covers your abdomen or take a shower.
- * Drink warm fluids that may help relax you (herbal teas, hot chocolate, decaf coffee).
- * Drink plenty of fluids (8-10 glasses every day) to stay well hydrated.
- * Try using a heating pad, hot water bottle or warm pack to your lower abdomen or back for cramping or backache.
- * Have someone give you a back rub or massage.
- * Eat lightly.
- * Take walks.
- * Rest if you are tired, sleep when you can.
- * Call us with questions or concerns.

WHEN TO CALL

It is not necessary to go to the hospital immediately when labor begins. It is best to remain at home during the early stages. Therefore, if you think you are in labor, please call the midwife before you go to the hospital. She will talk with you to decide the best time to go to the hospital, and will be able to meet you when you arrive.

AS A GUIDE CALL WHEN:

- * The contractions are coming every five minutes (the beginning of one contraction to the beginning of the next contraction), lasting around 60 seconds for one hour, and you are having to breathe through the contractions
- * If you have any bright red vaginal bleeding
- * If your membranes (bag of water) break
- * If there is a decrease in the baby's movements.

WHERE TO GO

Go to the information desk in the main lobby and take the elevators that are left of the information desk. Go to the 3rd floor and go left to the Family Maternity Center. A receptionist will be straight ahead of you to help you find your way.

HOW TO REACH US

Phone numbers:

Midwifery Group: 275-7892
RAMP: 275-2962
Answering Exchange 258-4970

WHAT TO EXPECT IN THE 9TH MONTH OF YOUR PREGNANCY

