

HOW TO KNOW IF THIS IS LABOR

How do you think this labor will begin for you? Will you feel a compelling nesting urge? Will you experience lightening (i.e., will the baby drop)? Will the Braxton-Hicks contractions you are experiencing begin to feel different? Will you lose your mucous plug or have bloody show? Will your membranes rupture? However labor begins, you will certainly recognize it. Here are some pointers to help you.

Trust this:
LABOR ALWAYS DECLARES ITSELF!

Description of contractions

Contractions have been described as feeling like menstrual cramps, as pressure, as a stretching above the pubic bone. Contractions that will bring your baby will feel different from Braxton-Hicks.

If you think you are having contractions

Change what you are doing. If you're lying down, get up. If you're up, try lying down. If it stops, it is probably not baby-getting kind of labor.

Remember

- ☺ In labor, contractions increase in frequency and duration.
- ☺ You may have contractions every 5 minutes for a long time then stop.
- ☺ There is no such thing as false labor. The uterus is toning, the baby is finding her/his position and the cervix is ripening.
- ☺ Martha Sears, author, RN, childbirth educator and mother of eight, says that she would convince herself that what she was feeling was just pre-labor. As soon as she started to think "This is IT," it kicked up her stress level. She would just pretend that this was not it, until she could not pretend anymore.
- ☺ Pat Jones, CNM, says to keep having your life for as long as you can have it. If it is day, do your day (but do not overdo, this is not the time to clean out the garage!). If it is bedtime, sleep.
- ☺ You'll want to know two different things: how often contractions are occurring (frequency) and how long they are lasting (duration).
 - ☺ Frequency: Time contractions from the beginning of one contraction to the beginning of the next.
 - ☺ Duration: Note when contractions end so you will know how long the contractions are lasting.
- ☺ Mom, if you have to let your support people know when contractions begin and end, it may be too early to be timing contractions! Remember: Keep having your life as long as you can!
- ☺ Is it amniotic fluid or urine? If it smells like urine, it's urine. Amniotic fluid smells like semen or straw.

RULE OF THUMB: The 5-1-1 Rule – Good “this really is it” indicator!

- Contractions are 5 minutes apart
- Contractions are lasting 1 minute
- Contractions are in this pattern for 1 hour