

LABOR VOCABULARY

- ❖ Vaginal Exam, Pelvic Exam, Pelvic, Cervical Check, “Check her”: These all mean the same thing. Someone inserts their first two fingers into the vagina to assess the ripening, dilation, and effacement of the cervix, as well as the descent and position of the baby.
- ❖ Dilation: How large the opening of the cervix is. We speak in terms of centimeters. 10 centimeters dilated means that the cervix is completely gone and open for the baby's head to enter the birth canal.
- ❖ Effacement, also referred to as thinning: How thin the cervix is. As the cervix pulls back and opens, the portion of the cervix that protruded into the vagina pulls back, kind of like a turtleneck going over baby's head. We speak in terms of percentages. 100% effaced means that the cervix is thin and flat on the baby's head or bag of waters.
- ❖ Ripe cervix: Indicates that the cervix has softened, thereby becoming prepared for opening for birth. A "green" or unripe cervix feels like the end of your nose. A ripe cervix feels more like your earlobe.
- ❖ Cervical lip: A small section of the cervix has not opened or thinned enough to let the baby through, while the rest of the cervix is completely ready for the baby to pass through.
- ❖ Engaged: The baby's head has entered the pelvis and is not going back up. Also known as lightening; also called "the baby has dropped".
- ❖ “She is complete”: A phrase that normally indicates that a woman is dilated to 10 centimeters.
- ❖ Stations: Measure the position of the baby's head in relation to the ischial tuberosities (the sit bones), which are the narrowest part of the pelvis. Floating means the baby's head has not entered the pelvis. -3 (negative 3) means the baby's head is still high in the pelvis. -2 means the baby has descended further. 0 means that the baby's head is even with the ischial tuberosities. +1 (plus 1) means that the baby's head is about 1 centimeter past the ischial tuberosities. +3 or +4 is crowning.
- ❖ Baby is anterior: Back of baby's head is to your front, normally a little off to the left or right. This is the preferred position for birthing.
- ❖ Baby is posterior: Back of baby's head is toward your back. Baby may turn to an anterior position. It is possible for baby to be born facing up, but this is not the preferred position for birthing.
- ❖ “She is ruptured”, “bag is broken”: Phrases that indicate that a woman’s water has broken, her membranes have ruptured.