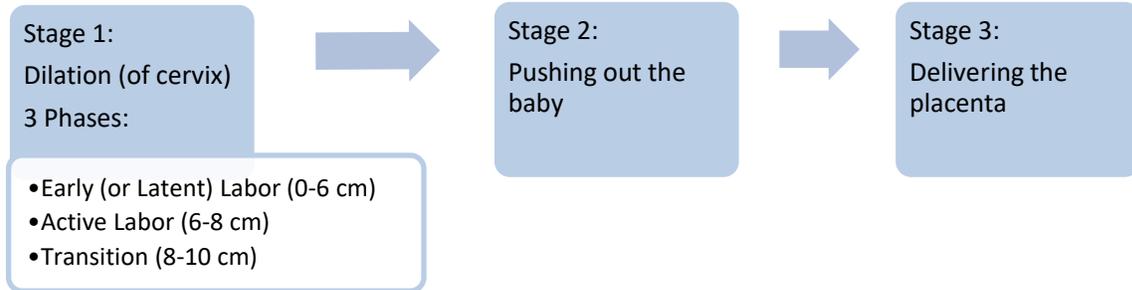


STAGES OF LABOR & PHASES OF LABOR: IN LABOR/AT LABOR

The fact is that labor becomes increasingly more intense, and often more difficult, until a baby comes out. A woman's behavior changes as she progresses through the stages, but not every woman reacts in the same way. Some women do not exhibit traditional emotional signposts (as Bradley calls them). Note that the line between the phases of labor may be blurry. For example, it is possible for a woman to begin to behave as though she were in active labor at 4 centimeters or to exhibit signs of transition at 7 centimeters.

Know that your body knows how to birth your baby, as surely as it knew how to grow your baby.

In common usage, when we speak of the stages of labor, we are normally referring to what are actually the phases of the first stage of labor. I have rarely heard anyone refer to these phases as anything but stages.



You are going to need to know 5 things about each stage:

Contraction Pattern	AT Labor	IN Labor	Support's Job	Mom's Job
	Behavioral cues from the laboring woman	What it feels like as you pass through each stage of labor		

STAGE 1: OPENING THE CERVIX

Early (or Latent) Labor: 0-6 cm

Contraction Pattern	AT Labor	IN Labor	Support's Job	Mom's Job
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under a minute, random OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.5-2 minutes or longer, but mom does not appear to be in labor; inconsistent pattern 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present Chatty Nesting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excited Anxious to be prepared Difficult to tell when contractions begin and end 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Companionship Distraction Self-care Rest Hydrate Nourish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep having your life Rest Hydrate Nourish

Active Labor: 6-8 cm

Contraction Pattern	AT Labor	IN Labor	Support's Job	Mom's Job
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 minute long (beginning to end) 5 minutes apart (beginning to beginning) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus narrows Withdraws to Labor Land LOOKS like labor (audible breathing, working with each contraction) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sleepy, tired Labor algebra (doing the math to figure out how long labor will last) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be attentive Touch if she wants it Hydrate Nourish Self-care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surrender Cope Move Trust

Transition: 8-10 cm

Contraction Pattern	AT Labor	IN Labor	Support's Job	Mom's Job
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-1.5 minutes long • 2-3 minutes apart 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very narrow focus • Fight/Flight • Tend/Befriend • Can't or won't • Shivering • Gets hot and cold • May vomit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feels overwhelming • Feels like panic • Feels like you are not getting a break because baby is low in pelvis • Pressure of baby in pelvis stays between contractions (This is a great sign!) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be attentive • Touch if she wants it • Fan between contractions • Cool cloth on face/forehead between contractions • Hydrate • Nourish • Stay calm • Self-care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surrender • Cope • Move, if your gut tells you to • Trust

STAGE 2: PUSHING OUT THE BABY

- In hospital: begins when you are found to be 10 cm (unless you labor down with an epidural)
- Out-of-hospital: begins when you begin pushing
- May get a Rest and Be Thankful Phase

Contraction Pattern	AT Labor	IN Labor	Support's Job	Mom's Job
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About 1 minute long • Space out to 4-5 minutes apart 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be more present (come out of Labor Land a little) • May sleep between contractions • May be hot and cold 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy boost • May feel tired or like you can't • Feels better for most (but not all) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support leg • Hydrate (Sips or ice chips) • Fan • Encouragement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Push with urge or coached pushing? • Rest between contractions • Move if your gut tells you to • Push out your baby!

STAGE 3: PUSHING OUT THE PLACENTA

- In hospital: Postpartum Pitocin speeds process; placenta delivers in 5-10 minutes
- Out-of-hospital: Baby at breast simulates Oxytocin; may take longer
- Contraction intensity decreases when baby is born, then ratchets back up a bit when it is time to deliver placenta
- You may be asked to give a little push to expel the placenta
- Placentas do not have bones, so they are not as difficult to deliver as babies!