

# Labor Guide



This is a guide for you about the signs of true and false labor. If you have any of these signs before 36 weeks of pregnancy (9 months), please call Labor and Delivery at 293-8497 or your doctor right away.

	True Labor	False Labor	What To Do
Contractions			
Muscles of uterus tighten and relaxes	1. Contractions occur at regular intervals, last 30 - 60 seconds	1. Contractions usually irregular.	<p>If you think you are in labor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rest, if possible, on your side.</li> <li>• Time your contractions with a watch. If one contraction starts at 9:10 and the next starts at 9:16, they are 6 minutes apart.</li> <li>• Eat or drink only light foods.</li> <li>• Come to the hospital when: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Contractions are at the level you discussed with your doctor</li> <li>▶ You have called Labor and Delivery at 293-8497. (Usually contractions are 5 - 6 minutes apart.)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	2. Contractions get gradually closer together.	2. Contractions do not get closer together. May stop after an hour or so.	
	3. Contractions may be felt in your back and lower abdomen.	3. Contractions usually not felt in your back.	
	4. Contractions continue or increase with walking.	4. Contractions stop with walking.	
	5. There is increasing discomfort.	5. Discomfort does not increase.	
	6. Your cervix softens, thins and opens.	6. Your cervix does not change.	
Show			
Pink, slightly bloody, or mucous discharge from vagina.	Show is present in small to moderate amount due to cervical change.	Show is not present.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell your doctor if you are having show with contractions.</li> <li>• Wear a pad if you wish.</li> </ul>

	True Labor	False Labor	What To Do
<b>Rupture Of Membranes</b>			
A <b>trickle</b> or <b>gush</b> of fluid from the vagina after bag around the baby breaks. Fluid is usually clear, but may be white or green.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bag of water breaks at any time until delivery.</li> <li>• Bag of water may break before you feel any contraction.</li> <li>• Fluid usually continues to leak, especially during contraction, which may become stronger.</li> </ul>	Bag of water does not break.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you think your water has broken, call your doctor or Labor and Delivery at 293-8497 and come to the hospital.</li> <li>• Do not take a bath or put anything into your vagina.</li> <li>• Wear a pad, if necessary, until you arrive to the hospital.</li> </ul>

Be patient because no two births are alike. An average first labor takes around 14 -19 hours. It will take some time for your cervix (opening to the uterus) to thin out (efface) and open (dilate).

Labor is divided into three stages. **Stage one** begins with the start of labor and continues until the cervix is fully open (dilated) at 10 centimeters. **Stage two** begins when the cervix is fully open (10 centimeters) and lasts until the baby is delivered. Stage two usually lasts 1 - 2 hours. During this time, you can begin to push the baby down the birth canal. **Stage three** is from the delivery of the infant to the delivery of the afterbirth (placenta). This is the shortest phase usually 15 - 20 minutes.

**If you would like more written information, please call the Library for Health Information at (614)293-3707. You can also make the request by e-mail: [health-info@osu.edu](mailto:health-info@osu.edu).**

© Copyright, (3/2003)  
OB - GYN Clinic  
The Ohio State University Medical Center

- ▶ Upon request all patient education handouts are available in other formats for people with special hearing, vision and language needs, call (614) 293-3191.

