

SIGNS OF LABOR

Possible signs that labor may begin in the next few days or weeks.

Backache:

- Not the type of backache you have in late pregnancy that changes when you shift position, but an ongoing dull ache that makes you restless and irritable.

Cramps:

- Cramping in your belly that is mild to moderate in discomfort.

PMS symptoms

Nesting Urge:

- A sudden irresistible urge to clean, or do projects to prepare for baby.

Upset stomach:

- Frequent, soft bowel movements (diarrhea). Flu-like symptoms.

Baby “drops”:

If you have these symptoms, it doesn't necessarily mean labor is going to start right away. It may be days or weeks before labor begins. These symptoms are just a good reminder to make sure you have everything prepared for labor and birth, and to make sure you know what other signs to be watching for. Don't get overly excited, just continue your normal routine, get lots of rest, eat and drink well, and take care of yourself.

Preliminary Signs that labor may be about to begin.

Bloody show:

- During pregnancy the cervix contains mucus, which may be released in late pregnancy. May be a thick 'plug' of pinkish mucus, which might come out when you use the toilet. May be thin, mucousy discharge on toilet paper. If there is more bright red blood than mucus, call your care provider.

(Note, it's common to have a brownish, bloody discharge within 24 hours of a vaginal exam or after intercourse. Don't mistake this for bloody show.)

Water breaks:

- Trickle or a gush. If it's just a little mucousy fluid, it may be mucous plug.
- Remember *TACO*: Time Amount Color Odor
- Let your provider know and me! Usually (80% of the time), you will go into labor on your own in the next 24 hours.

Braxton-Hicks Contractions:

- Also called “pre-labor” or “false labor” contractions.
- Some women never experience these, some women may have them for weeks before labor begins.
- Pre-labor contractions don't progress. They may be irregular, or may stay same length, strength, and frequency. They may last for a short time or for several hours.
- Some women even start to develop a pattern: with contractions every 6-7 minutes for 2-3 hours, but then stop again.
- Discomfort is mostly felt in the front of the abdomen, as muscles tighten up.
- May feel like your belly is a basketball.
- Contractions may stop if you walk, change position or change activity, eat, drink, or empty bladder.
- 'False Labor' doesn't mean they don't hurt, and it also doesn't mean that they're not doing anything. Although the contractions aren't dilating your cervix yet, they are helping your early to labor progress in other ways: moving the cervix to an anterior position, ripening, and effacing the cervix. Try not to be discouraged.

Positive Signs Labor has begun.

- Gush of amniotic fluid from vagina.
- Progressing contractions: get longer, stronger, and/or closer together with time.
- Are usually described as 'very strong' or 'painful',
- felt in the abdomen, back, or both. May start in the back, and radiate around to front.
- Usually increase if you walk.
- Dilation of cervix seen in vaginal exam.