



## ***The Early Signs Of Labor You Should Know***

**Know When You Are In Labor  
And What To Do Then?**

These Helpful Tips Are Brought to You by  
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*The Early Signs Of Labor You Should Know*  
A Golden Publishing House book  
November 2009

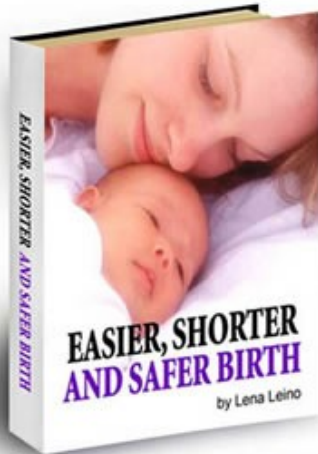
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## How Do You Know When You Truly Are In Labor?

When you conceive and become pregnant, your body begins to finely tune to give birth. Pregnancy is considered to be full-term about 38 weeks from fertilization, i.e. approximately 40 weeks from the start of the last menstruation.

As you approach the last weeks of pregnancy, you may wonder when labor will begin, whether symptoms you may be having could be the start of labor, and when you should call your doctor or head to the hospital.

If you are with visions of either giving birth in your car or making repeated "false alarm" trips to the hospital or birth center, this quick guide is for you.

To begin with, forget about TV portrayals of labor, where pregnant women suddenly look startled, clutch their bellies, and gasp, "I am going to have my baby NOW!" Then the boy is born with a rush of emotion and swift action. The mother doubles over from the pain of a single contraction, and the baby appears before the commercial break. In reality, labor usually begins less dramatically.

You'll have time to figure things out. The average labor lasts nine hours for first-time mothers and six-and-a-half for women laboring again - and that's from the onset of regular, painful contractions, occurring five to three minutes apart. Most women have several, if not many, additional hours from the time the first vague twinges begin and this pattern setting in.

Every woman's labor is unique. But understanding the typical signs of labor can help you know what to expect as your due date approaches.

There will be many signals your body will give you to let you know you are preparing for labor. Your body is organized and finely tuned to give birth, and there are several signs that will tell that you are in labor.

No one knows exactly what causes labor to start or why so many pregnancies become overdue. One of the recent studies published in *European Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology and Reproductive Biology* (Vol. 132, June 2007) revealed that when the level of specific mRNA molecules in mother's blood circulation increases the labor is about to begin. What is interesting is that these molecules

are of fetal origin. Could it be possible that the baby sends a message to the mother's body when it's time to deliver? What if the mother's body doesn't recognize this message? Could that be one of the reasons why so many pregnancies become overdue and EDD are passed?

Regardless of the fact that no one knows for sure what triggers labor — the truth is that every woman's birthing experience is unique. But as your due date approaches it's helpful to understand the typical signs of early labor.

Before we discuss about what the very first signs and symptoms of your labor are and how you can recognize them, it's good to be aware of what the early labor really is and how you should response to the first signs of labor.

## What Exactly Is "Early Labor"?

Early labor is an early phase of the labor and delivery process. While many women may not realize that they are in early labor, on the other hand, many pregnant women are so tuned to finally meet their baby that they wish every change in their bodily functions would be a sign of an early labor.

This is how Virginia Hospital Center describes early labor:

**Early Labor** (also called the **Latent Phase**)

This is the first phase of the first stage of labor. During early labor, the cervix is dilated from 0-3 centimeters. You may have mild to moderate contractions every 5-20 minutes. You may be uncomfortable, with a backache, feeling of fullness, or menstrual-like pain. Phase one is the longest section of labor. It may last from hours to days for first-time moms. Women who have already had a baby average eight hours in this phase.

If you ask pregnancy care professionals about the early signs of labor, most of them will tell you that your labor has started when you feel mild, irregular contractions. These contractions are generally more than 10 minutes apart. Some women might experience more frequent contractions, though they are mild and last for few seconds. With contractions you might feel pressure in the pelvis, backache or discomfort that is similar to menstrual cramping.

The early labor contractions, also called as Braxton Hicks contractions. In effect, your uterus is flexing its muscles, warming up in preparation for the labor contractions, which normally push your baby out at term. Braxton Hicks contractions are not efficient enough to deliver our baby, they are important in the prebirth process of effacement, early dilation of the cervix, and positioning your baby for the birth.

There are, however, many other less known signs of early labor that most pregnancy care professional won't tell you about. These early symptoms of labor are easy to recognize when you know what they are. To discover all of them, keep reading!

## **One of the Most Common Myths of "Knowing When You Are in Labor"**

If you are near to your due date or passed your EDD, a topic that most probably is in your mind is, "Will I know when I am truly in labor?"

Usually, childbirth educators and practitioners try to ease your mind with the standard answer of, "You'll know."

To be frank, that's one of the common myths of labor and delivery.

Early labor can last hours and even days. Braxton Hicks contractions can feel very real and thus if you are then told that you are experiencing "false labor" it's nothing else than irritating. Early labor is a part of the labor and delivery process, so how can anyone say your Braxton Hicks contractions are "false labor"?

Early labor contractions, however, can be difficult to tell apart from "true" labor contractions. They may be difficult for you to distinguish from the preterm uterine activity that precedes premature labor. While most women will know once they have reached the active phase of labor, early labor can be more subtle. It is not uncommon for women to be dilated four or even five centimeters and not be aware of the fact that they are in labor.

Early labor contractions are irregular and usually do not increase in intensity, frequency, or duration. Moms who have given birth before may actually have a more difficult time distinguishing true labor contractions from false labor.

## The Early Signs of Labor

First of all your body normally gives you some signs of labor a head of time that labor is on its way. As far as sign of early stage of labor during pregnancy is concerned, you should keep an eye on your body reactions. While these are signs of progress they do not mean that you will go into labor within a few hours or days. They are simply a means of saying that your body is getting ready to give birth.

The early symptoms that give you a clear sign that your labor is about to start include:

### **Loose Bowel Movements**

The intestine commonly empties just before the labor starts. A quick decrease in the level of hormone progesterone is being considered for causing this effect.

During pregnancy, the placenta makes high levels of the hormone, progesterone, which helps support the pregnancy. When the placenta stops producing progesterone – and maintaining the pregnancy - the hormone level drops quickly.

A drop in progesterone level is considered one of the factors that start labor contractions. The smooth muscle in the intestine is also sensitive to sudden changes in progesterone level. Thus, when the placenta stops producing progesterone, it results in episodes of loose bowel movements.

Another factor that can cause diarrhea just before labor starts is prostaglandins. Nearing labor your body will produce prostaglandins. This natural chemical has been shown to cause loose bowel movements as well.

Diarrhea doesn't sound like a very pleasant sign of impending labor, but if you have been suffering from constipation, this may be a bit of a relief. Gas, which is so common throughout pregnancy, will also become more of an issue.

Loose bowel movements won't last too long and the diarrhea serves two purposes. One is to empty the bowels in preparation for pushing the baby out of the womb. Secondly, the muscle contractions of bowel movements are very close to the type caused by the uterus.

It's good to note that if you are suffering severe diarrhea before your estimated delivery date, you should call your doctor because severe diarrhea can actually induce labor contractions and may cause preterm labor.

"When I went into labor with my first I had a lot of "loose stool" all morning long - I never lost my mucous plug (not that I could tell) and I don't think I even had BH contractions. I just went straight into the real thing!"

Mom at the [Babycenter.com](http://Babycenter.com) forum

### **Shivering or Trembling**

Another early sign that labor is occurring, is a feeling of shivering or trembling that you might experience without any sensation of coldness or weakness.

This shivering or trembling can be the result of the sudden drop in the level of progesterone in your body. Progesterone is a "warm" hormone and when the level suddenly drops just before your labor starts, you can have feelings of shivering or trembling.

"I woke up yesterday morning and could've sworn I was going into labor (for someone who doesn't know what labor feels like, lol). I just lay on the couch, shivering cause I was freezing..."

Blog at [thebillings.wordpress.com](http://thebillings.wordpress.com)

### **Vaginal Discharge**

Bleeding and spotting during the last weeks of your pregnancy immediately raises two anxiety provoking questions: "Is it time?" and "Is something wrong?"

The answer to these questions depends on the type of bleeding and the circumstances around it.

Pinkish-stained or red-streaked mucus appearing soon after making love or vaginal examination or brownish spotting appearing within 48 hours after the same is common. It's just a result of the sensitive cervix being manipulated.

Bright red bleeding or persistent spotting could be originated at the placenta and you should call your doctor immediately.

An increase in pinkish- and brownish-tinged vaginal secretions occurs as the softening of your cervix proceeds. When the cervix begins to dilate, the mucus plug, which has sealed the cervix throughout your pregnancy, begins to dislodge. As this occurs, a bright red to brownish liquid may appear which is called "bloody show".

Loosing the mucus plug, however, can also occur days before the labor actually begins. Sometimes it occurs during the labor. Therefore, this cannot be the only sign and symptom that labor is to come.

"Yes, bloody show and mucus plug are the same thing.

Here is my experience:

With DD, it was an actual textbook "plug". It came out in one big blob and there was NO mistaking what it was. I went into labor that same night.

With DS, it was more of a gradual process over a week. It was never bloody or blood tinged, just lots of mucus over several days. I didn't go into labor until over a week after it had started to come out and that was only because I requested my MW break my membranes to get things started.

So, it doesn't mean that it'll start right away."

Mom at Mothering.com forum

## Lightening

Lightening or "dropping" occurs when the baby descends into the pelvic cavity and his head is engaged in the upper part of the bony pelvis. Lightening is an indication that the baby has dropped, settling deeper into your pelvis and relieving some of the pressure on your diaphragm. This will give you a sense of relief in that your rib cage expands more easily and you can breathe deeply again and eat more.

On the other hand, you may feel increased pressure on your bladder, which means more trips to the bathroom. Others may comment on your changed appearance, although you might not be aware of it at all.

Lightening usually occurs up to two weeks before labor in 65% of first-time moms. However, in subsequent pregnancies, the baby may not drop until labor has begun.

The degree of lightening is measured according to a scale that corresponds to the level of the baby's head in relation to the mother's pelvic girdle. This is referred to as the baby's station. Stations progress from -3 to +3, with -3 meaning that the baby is still floating above the pelvis and +3 meaning that the head is crowning. The baby is said to be fully engaged when at 0 station.

"...my kids "dropped" immediately before I went into labor. With my son, I had a Dr's appointment on Friday at which point I was only 1cm dilated and he was still high and transverse. I delivered vaginally 24 hours later. With my daughter, I had an ultrasound done about six hours before I went to the hospital. I suspected I was in labor at the time of the ultrasound, but was assured I was not. Six hours later, though, I was clearly hours away from having a baby. Some women feel the baby drop weeks before they go into labor...but not me. lol. For me, it was more like they dropped as I went into labor. ..."

Mom at [boards.msn.com](http://boards.msn.com)  
"Health & Fitness - Pregnancy forum"

## Signs of Labor

These days it almost goes without saying that becoming educated about childbirth is one of the best ways to prepare for your unique experience.

Learning the signs labor is part of your self-education. It helps you know when to call your doctor or midwife and go to the place of your choice for delivery.

**If you have any signs of labor before 36 weeks or 9 months of pregnancy, call your doctor right away.**

The signs of labor are regular contractions and sometimes rupture of membranes.

## **Regular Contractions and Dilation**

The most used signs to confirm that you are in labor are the consistency of your contractions and dilation of your cervix. The cervix will steadily dilate, and it will continue to, until you are fully effaced. Your contractions will become more rhythmic and will begin to lengthen in time and in intensity.

By using the **Contraction Follow-up Charts** that come with the "Easier, Shorter and Safer Birth" guide, you can easily see and tell your caregiver about the progress of your labor. To get your copies of the guide and the charts now, visit [www.MaternityAcupressure.com](http://www.MaternityAcupressure.com)

Contractions occur when the muscles of the uterus tighten and relax as the uterus prepares for delivery.

If you are having your first child, you might be wondering what do labor contraction and labor pains feel like

### **Braxton-Hicks Contractions**

Labor is said to begin when your uterus starts to contract regularly. In the days before the onset of labor, you may experience minor contractions that feel like tightening, and cause discomfort rather than pain. These contractions are called Braxton-Hicks contractions.

Sometimes these contractions are even called "false labor". However, when you experience Braxton-Hicks contractions for days, you definitely feel that you are in labor. That's why I find "false labor" something that does not exist. In addition, these early labor contractions are an important part of the childbirth event because they align and position the baby for birth.

These pre-labor contractions feel like a tightening across your belly or like the baby suddenly stretched in all directions. If you have had Braxton-Hicks Contractions for days and your early labor is very slow, you can help your labor to progress with maternity acupressure points.

### **Pre-Labor Contractions**

(Sometimes called "false" labor contractions. There isn't, however, anything "false" in labor and all contraction are real!)

These pre-labor contractions often occur during the last month of pregnancy.

Characteristics to pre-labor contractions:

- They are irregular
- Don't get closer together
- May stop after an hour or so
- Don't usually feel in your back
- They stop when you start walking
- Don't get more painful over time

## **Labor Contractions**

Then, how do the labor contractions feels like? Many women say that you know when you are having labor pains or that they are impossible to describe and you need to experience them in order to know.

Labor contraction and labor pains feel like very strong menstrual cramps or bad gas cramps that sometimes give shooting pains up your bum like trapped wind usually does. These cramps are usually so strong that you have trouble walking or talking during them.

The first labor pains are usually felt in the front site of the pelvis and groin. Some women feel the labor contractions low in the groin or in the lower back. They may radiate from front to back or back to front or down your legs. As labor proceeds, the pains start to appear in the abdomen. These labor contractions occur as tightening of you stomach, which means that your stomach becomes really tight.

When the baby's birth is near, stretching of the perineum causes burning sensations. At this stage many women feel like they are going to burst. This feeling is, however, for very short period of time. Using good laboring positions and movement help the baby to rotate and find the easiest way out and therefore the labor and delivery is shorter and easier, especially when good labor positions are used with helpful techniques such as maternity acupressure.

Labor pains and contractions, when they are correctly managed, have an important part in assisting and guiding your body to give

birth to your baby. There is no need to automatically opt for epidural or - on the other hand - to give birth in severe pains without any labor pain relief. Educate yourself about different ways to get relief from labor pains, because you don't have to automatically opt-in for epidural.

#### **Labor Contractions**

Help the cervix to soften, thin, and open for delivery. Labor contractions will help you to push your baby out.

Characteristics to labor contractions:

- Regular
- Last 30-60 seconds
- Get closer together
- In the lower back and lower abdomen
- Continue or increase with walking

## **Rupture of Membranes**

Also known as "water breaking", the rupture of membranes occurs when the amniotic sac breaks. The bag of water can break at any time. It may break before you feel any contractions and may leak during a contraction. When it breaks, the fluid can either trickle or gush from the vagina.

If you are worried that your water will break in public, you are not alone. The idea of the bag of waters breaking on a bus, in a crowded place or in the workplace is as horrifying as losing bladder control in public.

Before you get too worried about possibly experiencing rupture of membranes in public, there are two things you should know:

Firstly, the waters braking before labor begins is uncommon. Indeed, most of pregnant women will not experience it and their membranes might be broken in the hospital during labor.

Secondly, once the membranes rupture, the flow of amniotic fluid is unlikely to be heavy. You are most likely to notice the leaking while you are lying down. The leaking usually stops or at least slows down when you stand up or sit down, because the baby's head acts as a cork, blocking the flow temporarily.

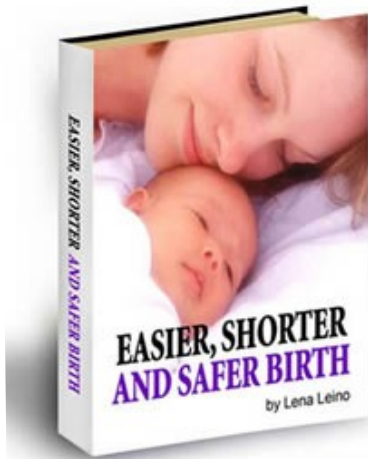
"As for my waters breaking, YES, I missed that. I had totally no idea they had broken. Got to the hospital the midwife asked me if they had broken and I said no, she did the internal and they had broken. When it happened I have NO IDEA, can only presume it was whilst I was on the toilet as I left no mess anywhere."

Mom at [EssentialBaby.com.au](http://EssentialBaby.com.au) forum

Wearing a panty liner or maxi pad in the last weeks may give you a sense of security. You might want to place a heavy towel, a plastic sheet or hospital "chucks" under your bed sheets in the last weeks, so that you won't worry about your waters breaking in the middle of the night.

After the rupture of membranes, you should go into labor within 24 hours. If it doesn't, there is a risk of infection. Therefore, your doctor may need to induce your labor with Pitocin. To avoid medical labor induction, use maternity acupressure for natural onset of labor.

## **Avoid Medical Labor Induction & Manage Labor Pain Risk-Free with Safe & Effective Maternity Acupressure Techniques!**



Simply get Your copy of "Easier, Shorter and Safer Birth" guide at [www.MaternityAcupressure.com](http://www.MaternityAcupressure.com)

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Click the link below to get your copy of the "Easier, Shorter and Safer Birth" guide on your computer **in 7 Minutes!**

**[Click HERE "Easier, Shorter and Safer Birth"](#)**

You should note, however, that not everyone's water breaks before active labor. According to some doctors, waters break only in 15% of women during the onset of labor.

If your water breaks while you are at home, notify your pregnancy caregiver and keep track of when that occurs, as well as the consistency and amount of amniotic fluid that has been discharged. Amniotic fluid should be clear and odorless, and will usually continue to leak until you deliver. Do not take a bath or put anything into your vagina, after your water breaks. You can wear a pad. If you have any questions or concerns about rupture of membranes, talk to your doctor or midwife.

### **What to Pack For Childbirth in Hospital?**

The main idea to prepare for your labor and pack your hospital bag in before hand is to ensure is that the mom in labor is as comfortable as possible. Planning for your special delivery can be incomplete if you have never had a baby before.

There are many lists out there that discuss what to pack for childbirth. The list below is a detailed one. Having these tools in your labor bag will make you as the mom feel more comfortable to start with. When you have all the right items with you, your supporting people can nurture and take care of you at a seconds notice. Some of the items are such that you might not have thought of!

### **Items to Bring with You to the Delivery Hospital**

**LIP BALM** - Breathing can dry out your lips. Nothing is more annoying than dry, chapped lips.

**HAND LOTION** – In the hospital the disinfection soaps can really make your hands feel dry and itchy. Pack a small bottle of moisturizing lotion into your bag so that you won't get irritated by dry and itchy skin.

**TOILETRIES** - such as shampoo, soap, lotion, deodorant, makeup, and a mirror, all which will help you freshen up.

**TOOTHBRUSH AND TOOTHPASTE** – Don't forget these! When you have clean teeth and fresh breath you will always feel better. It is amazing to witness women get more "pep" after brushing their teeth during labor.

**COLGATE WISPS** – Colgate Wisps allow you to freshen up your breath and keep your teeth clean even if you are not able to get into the bathroom.

**DEPENDS** - after delivery your baby, there will be a lot of lochia and sanitary pads might not catch everything. Depends provide large coverage and will give you the coverage you need as you recover from child birth. Try freezing them beforehand so you can get relief when put them on.

**ADULT WIPES** - allow you to freshen up in your bed until you have the strength to get in to the shower. They are found in the same aisle as the Depends.

**PERI BOTTLE** – Taking good care of your hygiene is important after giving birth. A peri bottle helps you to rinse your vaginal area and freshen up with ease.

**GEL MASK FOR PUFFY EYES** - Labor can give tension headache or/and swollen look on your face. A chilled mask is a great tool to relieve the headache or your puffy eyes.

**HAIR BRUSH** - For sure you want to have tidy hair during your stay in the hospital. Hairbrush is also great relaxation tool: ask someone to rush your hair during labor. You can also have a specific scalp massager. It is time-tested and it works!

**HAIRBAND** - If you have long hair, pack a hair band with you to pull back your hair out of your face when in labor. You'll be thankful for a hair band after labor, too, when visitors start arriving.

**SLIPPERS** - Most hospitals provide "one-size fits all" type of slippers. It's a good idea to have your own that fit your feet.

**ROBE AND PAJAMAS** - A robe and nightgown are nice to have, even though not completely necessary, as the hospital will provide a gown. You may feel more comfortable with your own familiar clothes, but do realize that they will probably become stained. Due to lochia, it's advisable to use the robe and pajamas the hospital will provide you (no matter how institutional they look like). It's practical because you need to change your clothes up to few times during the day. If you like to feel homey and look better during the visiting hours, bring your own robe and pajama.

**MASSAGE OIL** - Massage helps you to relax and help the labor go faster as well as less labor discomfort. With some massage oil, it's comfortable for you to receive a back and shoulder rub.

**PLASTIC OR WOODEN MASSAGERS** - If your supporting person is not used to give a massage, massage tools are ideal. This way the supporting person can massage you longer and more frequently without straining himself.

**LAVENDER AROMATIC OIL or SCENTS** - Lavender scent will calm the mind. A drop of oil or lotion will do. Use carefully because too much of this scent could make matters worse.

**BIRTH BALL** - If your hospital doesn't have birth balls for everyone, you need to bring your own! Birth ball is a great labor tool that helps to widen the pelvis, lessen the pain and speeds along the labor.

**ICE PACK** - Ice packs are useful to give relief from labor pains. Try them your lower back or inner or outer thighs.

**HEAT PACK** - Heat packs are good for labor pains as well, especially for achy back, shoulders and lower abdomen.

**CAMERA and CAMCORDER** - A camera and/or camcorder for any memory recording that you want done. You will not want to miss the opportunity to capture the first moments of your little baby after he or she is born. If you want to take photos during the delivery it can be done discretely if done on the side of the mother.

**CHARGE THE CAMERA BATTERIES** – Additionally, check that there is enough space on your memory card before the labor starts!

**STOP WATCH** - Not entirely necessary but sometimes the partners need to have something technical play with. Timing contractions is good calming distraction for them. Also if you're the type of person who likes to know how long you've been waiting for the doctor to arrive, a stop watch is a good item to have.

**CD PLAYER & MAGAZINES** - Entertainment is important as a distraction for you and as a soothing mechanism. If you think you'll want it, pack a CD player with your favorite CDs, an iPod, or radio. You may also want a magazine to pass some time.

**DIFFERENT TYPES OF MUSIC** - Choose music that you like, from soft and relaxing to high energy kind of music. Sometimes music that you don't listen to is great, relaxing and mediation music that might not be your typical choice can be great during labor.

**SNACKS** - Healthy snacks such as nuts, cereal bars, bagels, sandwiches, and fruit will be appreciated by both you and your labor support person. Labor can take a long time, and it is energy-draining. Also, when a snack is handy, your labor support person won't have to choose between leaving your side and starving. Of course, if you want to pack anything perishable such as fresh fruit and sandwiches, these obviously cannot be packed very far in advance of going to the hospital.

**PRE-SWEETENED KOOL-AID** - Today most hospital allow the mom to drink and eat lightly during labor. It's good, however, to have pre-sweetened Kool-Aid to freshen the bland ice chips in case you are not allowed to eat or drink.

**PACKS OF HONEY** - Honey gives good quality energy fast. It can also be used to relieve the possible shakes during the latter stages of labor. You'll find these small honey packs at fast food restaurants or cafeterias.

**ALTOIDS** - Altoids are said to be the best for nausea and fresh breath.

**A PAD OF PAPER AND A PEN** - A pad of paper and a pen are a good way to keep track of any instructions or important information you are given at the hospital. Don't rely on your memory alone.

**COPY OF YOUR BIRTH PLAN** — Bring several copies of your birthing plan, if you made one. This can then easily be distributed to any nurses or doctors who need it. It's a good idea to give a copy for your ob-gyn before your labor even starts, so he knows what your birth plan is.

**LIST OF PHONE NUMBERS** - A list of phone numbers for all the family and friends you want to contact immediately and a cell phone for doing the calling.

**NURSING BRA** – In two to three days after giving birth your cup size suddenly increase due to the fact that your breasts will start producing milk in larger quantities. Be prepared with nursing bras!

**GOING- HOME FOR YOU** - Clothes that you wore when you were 5-6 months pregnant are usually ideal. It's surprising how little you drop in size after delivering the baby!

**GOING-HOME OUTFIT FOR THE BABY** - Newborn size clothes for your baby. Please remember that your baby was inside of you for almost 10 months and is used to much warmer "climate". Your newborn needs warm clothes, no matter what the season is. Remember to cover your baby's head with a hat that covers the ears as well!

**BLANKET** - A blanket for your baby and a few diapers just in case they are needed.

**CAR SEAT** - Lastly, a rear-facing baby car seat is essential. Make sure it is properly installed ahead of time. No, this is not an item to pack in your suitcase, but it is important enough to mention here, because without it, you can't bring your precious new baby home.

## **What to Do When Your Labor Begins?**

If you think you are in labor:

- Rest, if possible, on your left side.
- Eat or drink only light foods.
- 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.

**(IMPORTANT:** Use the Contraction Follow-up Charts that come with the "Easier, Shorter and Safer Birth" guide to easily track the progress of your labor. You can get the guide and the charts now at [www.MaternityAcupressure.com](http://www.MaternityAcupressure.com))

## **When to Go to the Hospital or Birth Center?**

Excitement and joy are probably your primary emotions when you suspect that you are finally in labor. Do not be concerned if you find that you are somewhat nervous. After all, it is going to be a big day – or night - for you. Let your nearest support persons know so that they can prepare themselves.

It is very common to go in the hospital with too early labor, and be sent back home. The home is a much better place to be in during your early labor because you can do everything there. You can relax better at home, which helps your labor progress.

Most of the hospitals advice you to come when you have experienced contractions 7-8 minutes apart for an hour. These contractions should be strong and continuous whether you are resting in your bed or walking around.

At latest, you should go to the hospital when the contractions are 3-5 minutes apart and you are very uncomfortable with them. Get your partner to keep a chart of the contractions.

If you are just not sure, you go ahead and call your doctor, midwife or doula, and he or she will help you to evaluate exactly what is going on.

Before you make a call to your caregiver, have your Contractions Follow-up Charts in hand to be prepared to answer the following questions:

- How far apart are your contractions?
- How long do they last?
- How long have you had these regular contraction?

**(NOTE:** Use the **Contraction Follow-up Charts** that come with the "Easier, Shorter and Safer Birth" guide to easily track the progress of your labor. You can get the guide and the charts now at [www.MaternityAcupressure.com](http://www.MaternityAcupressure.com))

These questions will help the caregiver to determine, over the phone, if you need to get to a hospital and how close your delivery is.

Before your labor, check out your hospital fees. Some hospitals charge for a whole day, even if you would register at 11pm. Thus, if your contractions start at night and are 8-10 minutes apart shortly before midnight, you might want to stay at home until over midnight, in such case.

## **When You Need to Go to the Hospital – Although You Don't Have Contractions?**

Being aware of your baby's activity and movements is very important. If your baby shows decreased activity (fetal kick count) you should contact your doctor or go to the hospital.

One way to keep track of the baby's activity is through the fetal kick count. The fetal kick count is determined by counting how many times the baby kicks in two hours out of the whole day. Here is how to count the kicks: Pick a one-hour window, preferably when the baby is active and count how often the baby moves. Once you have felt 10 fetal movements, look at your watch, and if it has been less than an hour, you are done for the day.

If you do not get 10 kicks in one hour, you can extend the time to two hours. If you still do not get 10 kicks, you should see your doctor for an evaluation.

The fetal kick count is simply a way for you to do a daily check of your baby's well-being in between doctor's visits. Studies have shown that when mothers do not get their kick counts tallied, it could make a difference in the outcome of the baby's welfare.

As you get farther into the third trimester, you may feel as if the baby is taking longer to get its kick counts, but you should still be able to get them. At this point, the baby is moving and active, but not as much.

Additionally, if your intuition says that something is wrong, trust your feelings and get a doctor to make an evaluation. A mother's intuition is worth respecting.

## **How to Make It in Time to the Hospital?**

Even if you know your way to the hospital or birth center, where to park and what entrance to use, it is wise to give a second thought.

### **1. The exact name and the address of the hospital or birth center**

Please make sure that everyone attending to your labor knows exactly which hospital or birth center you are going to deliver at, including the exact address and entrance number.

Our memory and our brain are complex and can do tricks, so this simple piece of information ensures that your partner, mother, friend or doula, is there for you in the hospital or birthing center when the time comes.

### **2. Alternative routes to the hospital or birth center**

Realizing that there can always be unusual traffic, an accident, a broken light, etc., and knowing a few routes, can be very beneficial.

Having a "plan B" does not require tactical maps and dozens of routes to the hospital or birth center. Merely knowing a few routes can be your best option prior to labor, when your brain is clearly elsewhere.

### **3. Know where to park and the parking rules**

In addition to having alternative routes planned, it is important to know where you can park. Some places have special parking while others ask that you park in regular parking – and both of the options could make it hard for you to find a vacant slot.

Take note of any parking fees involved, how to make the payment, and whether or not there are time limits. It would be harsh that you got a parking ticket or your car towed while you were in the hospital or birth center.

### **4. Know the right entrance and where to report**

Other things to find out include where to go once you are at the hospital or birth center. Hospitals have several entrances, so check out in advance which one you are supposed to use.

In addition to the right entrance, you need to know where to register. Some facilities ask that you report directly to the labor

floor, while others ask that you report to admitting during the day, the emergency room after business hours, and other combinations.

If your hospital organizes brief birthing classes or offers tours, this would be a good time to ask these questions. Alternatively, ask your doctor or midwife, or simply call the hospital and ask someone to explain the procedures to you.

By taking care of these preparations, you make sure that everyone – including you – will get to the hospital on time.

## **More FREE Tips and Advice for You at**

### **[Good Birthing Positions](#)**

Giving birth on your back is not the only option! Using different birthing positions during your labor can significantly shorten your labor time.

<http://www.GoodBirthingPositions.com>

### **[Giving Birth at Home](#)**

Listen to a doula that has given birth at home for her three children!

<http://www.AboutHomebirth.com>

### **[Breastfeeding Your Baby](#)**

All possible breastfeeding questions answered at

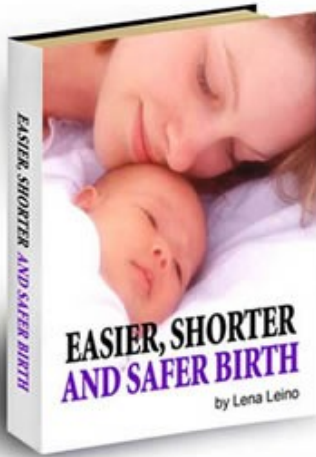
<http://www.BreastfeedingBaby.net>

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How to get in shape after pregnancy – safely and effectively?

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## Have an Easier, Shorter and Safer Birth!



Simply get Your copy of "**Easier, Shorter and Safer Birth**" labor acupressure guide at

[www.MaternityAcupressure.com](http://www.MaternityAcupressure.com)

This guide is filled with **simple and easy** techniques that help you deliver your baby with **less pain**, in a **shorter time**, **avoid medical labor induction**, and have a **good birthing experience**.

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