

Labor Warning Signs

This hand-out is to give you an idea of what signs you can look for to help you recognize the onset of labor and to tell the difference between true labor and “false labor”. The most important thing to remember about a due date is that it is only a guideline – there is nothing “magic” about it that will help labor begin. Women often don’t give birth on their due dates. The beginning of labor is unpredictable, and often happens a little early or late. This is no cause for anxiety or alarm. Labor may begin as much as two weeks before or after your due date and still be considered normal.

In the last several weeks of pregnancy, you may notice that your abdomen gets hard and then gets soft again. As you get closer to your delivery date, you may find that this may feel similar to menstrual cramps and become uncomfortable or even painful. These irregular cramps are called Braxton-Hicks contractions, or false labor pains. They may occur more frequently when you are physically active. False labor can occur just at the time when labor is expected to start, so it is sometimes difficult to tell this from true labor. Don’t be upset or embarrassed if you react by thinking labor is beginning. Sometimes the difference can only be determined by a vaginal exam. The following may help you to tell the difference between true and false labor:

TRUE LABOR

Contractions regular
Contractions increase in intensity
Contractions gradually get closer together
Cervix dilates

FALSE LABOR

Contractions irregular
Intensity remains the same or decreases
Contractions remain the same or farther apart
Cervix does not dilate

WHEN TO CALL THE DOCTOR:

If you experience any of the following symptoms, you should call the office at (972) 596-2470.

1. Vaginal bleeding more than a period.
2. Significant decrease of fetal movement.
3. Contractions every five minutes for one hour, with contractions lasting 45-60 seconds each.
4. Sudden gush of water or continual slow leakage of water from the vagina (fluid is usually thin and clear and has a “slick” feeling much like bleach).
5. Blurred vision or flashes of light in front of eyes.
6. Severe or continual abdominal pain.

You may also pass mucus per vagina from time to time around the time of labor. It is not necessary to contact the office unless it accompanies one of the above symptoms.

Drs. Jacobs, Umholtz, Diaz, DaVolio, Mos and Licker