



TERM LABOR

Any or all of these three signs – contractions, rupture of membranes, bloody “show” – can signal the beginning of labor.

CONTRACTIONS: When contractions come at regular intervals, increase in frequency, duration, and intensity as time progresses, and are not relieved when you lie down, you may be in labor. These contractions may be felt in the abdomen, lower back, or as a dull ache across the back which radiates to the front. They may be accompanied by a sense of pressure in the pelvis. When contractions occur you should time the frequency (time from the beginning of one contraction to the beginning of the next) and duration (time from the start of the contraction until it subsides).

RUPTURE OF MEMBRANES: The rupture of membranes, also called breaking of the bag of waters, may be a sudden gush or a slow leak. Once the membranes rupture, you cannot stop the flow the way you could control the flow of urine. There is no pain when the membranes rupture. The membranes do not always rupture early in labor. If your bag of waters breaks or leaks, note the color of the fluid; it should be clear. Call your doctor’s office or labor and delivery **RIGHT AWAY**.

“SHOW”: The mucous plug which closes off the entrance to your uterus while you are pregnant may be expelled prior to or during labor. This is a small mucous mass usually tinged with a little blood. Its appearance is probably a sign that your cervix is beginning to thin or dilate, however, it does not always mean that labor is beginning. Bloody show or spotting after a cervical exam is very normal.

WHEN TO CALL THE DOCTOR

If you suspect any of these signs of labor are happening and would like to discuss them, feel free to call and talk with the nurse practitioner or doctor. It is best if you can make the call yourself. This way you will be able to answer questions directly and explain exactly how you feel.

UNLESS INSTRUCTED OTHERWISE – YOU SHOULD CALL THE OFFICE WHEN:

Your contractions are 5 minutes apart for 1 hour

Your bag of waters ruptures or leaks

You have any bleeding other than a “show”

You feel very uncomfortable