

Stages of Labor Guide

<i>Stage of Labor</i>	<i>Contractions and Other Sensations</i>	<i>Physical Milestones</i>	<i>Emotional Milestones and Coping Methods</i>
Pre-labor	On and off or constant non-progressing, for hours or days. Cervix ripens and starts to thin out and open.	Body and baby getting ready physically and hormonally.	Over excited, impatience. Distraction, distraction, distraction.
1st or Dilation Stage: Early Labor	30-45 seconds long, 5-20 minutes apart. Cervix continues to thin out and open even more.	Dilating from "0"-5 cm	Usually excited or a little bit nervous. Rituals: breathing, focusing and visualization. Bag of waters might release.
Active Labor	About 60 seconds long, 3-5 minutes apart	Dilating from 5 to 8 cm. 7-8 cm is the toughest!	Getting a little bit more intense, maybe a bit cranky as labor goes on. Needs help and a lot of focus to go through contractions.
Transition	1-2 min apart, 60-90 seconds long	Dilating from 8-10 - shaking, vomiting and sweating. Out of body experience.	May want to give up, cry and ask for medication, needs anchoring. Previous rituals and comfort techniques might not work anymore. Surrender and let go – go with the labor flow!
2nd or Birthing stage: Resting phase	Contractions might stop for as long as 20 mins. Uterus is catching up.		Confusing time. Mom enjoying the relief but worried about the baby.
Descent phase	Urges come back, bear down sensation.	Baby in the birth canal.	Mom might be discouraged by baby sliding back after each push. Encourage to touch or look at baby's head.
Crowning and birth	"Ring of fire" – normal sensation caused by the stretching of the tissue.	Baby's head is stretching the vaginal opening.	Don't push, pant with chin up. Then breathe baby out – EXTREME SATISFACTION!
3rd or Placenta stage	Lots of cramping and uncomfortable sensations caused by the vigorous, external, low abdominal massage.	The uterus is contracting back to its original size, closing the wound left behind by the placenta.	Mom is shaky and weak while uterus cramps. Mom might need a few minutes break to process her achievement before enjoying her baby. – IT IS OK!

How do I time contractions? Start to start tells how far apart! Time from the start of one contraction to the start of the next.

What if my water breaks before I'm in labor? This is less likely, but note TACO - Time, Amount, Color, Odor and report to your care provider.

When should I go to my place of birth? Ask in advance! Fill in care provider's answer here:
_____ otherwise whenever you feel like going, or at 4-1-1.

When would I call my doula? Anytime after 38th week and/or whenever you need her!