

Information for Women on Labour & Birth

Introduction

Most women go into labour between 37 – 42 weeks of pregnancy. Around this time it is normal to feel tired, heavy, have backache, a pressure sensation, pass urine frequently and have an increased vaginal discharge.

It is important for you to rest and prepare for your baby's birth, pack your bags, meet friends and family and enjoy your free time.

This leaflet is designed to help you

- Recognise the beginning of labour
- Provide you with tips on staying at home during early labour
- Decide when to come to hospital

Signs of Labour

You may have one or more of the following.

<u>Signs</u>	<u>Why it happens</u>
'Show' – sticky mucus vaginal discharge with streaks of red/brown blood.	The cervix is softening and thinning out in preparation for labour.
Backache, period – like cramps, pressure sensation.	Baby moving down and the womb preparing for labour and birth.
Waters breaking	Baby's head moving down and your body trying to start labour.
Contraction (Pains)	Muscles of the womb tighten and relax to push the baby downwards and open cervix.

Some of these signs of labour, such as ‘show’ and backache/cramps, are often known as ‘early labour’, and can last for a few days before real labour starts.

Tips for early labour

The **best** place for you to be when you are in early labour is at home, with familiar surroundings, family and friends.

Firstly you need to think positive thoughts. Labour pain is normal. Think of it as an experience that you must go through to meet your baby. Work with the contractions, go with your body and remember you can do it!

The following are some tips to help you when in early labour:

<u>Tip</u>	<u>Why?</u>
Go for a walk	Exercise and staying mobile helps the baby position itself for the labour
Upright positions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a birthing ball • Straddle a chair 	Open the pelvis to help the baby’s head get into position for labour Relieves backache Facilitates back massage
Bath/shower	Relieve backache and cramps, help you relax, provides a diversion
Rest	You may feel tired – listen to your body
Music/TV/DVD	Provides a diversion, helps you relax
Diet and fluids (small light meals of whatever you would like to eat)	Keeps you hydrated and provides energy for labour
Hot water bottle	Can ease backache
Birthing Ball Beanbag	Assists you to get into comfortable positions during contractions

Pillows	
TENS Machine	May help with contraction pains
Deep breathing and massage	A useful coping strategy during contractions. Also helps you relax
Partner Family Friends Other children	Support of people close to you will help you feel safe and loved. This will make you more relaxed.

When to come to hospital

- If you think your waters have broken
- If you have vaginal bleeding (other than a 'show')
- If your baby is not moving as much as usual
- If you think you are in labour (see below)

If this is your first baby...

Everyone differs, however if you feel the contractions are becoming regular, stronger, lasting longer and you are feeling it more difficult to stay at home – come to the hospital. There is no big rush, first babies usually take their time being born.

If this is your second or subsequent baby...

If you feel the contractions are becoming regular and stronger – come to the hospital.

(Bring your bag and hospital notes if you carry them).

Remember you can ring the hospital anytime (01 4085200) and ask to speak to a midwife if you have any queries or concerns.

