



# LABOR ADVICE

As you approach the end of your pregnancy, you may have questions regarding how to tell when labor has really started and what to do when this happens. Hopefully, the information provided here will help answer some of those questions. Keep this sheet in a handy place to refer to when you think labor is beginning. As always, if you have any other questions or concerns, do not hesitate to ask your provider.

## **Normal Changes:**

In the last few weeks of pregnancy, it is normal to have irregular contractions, backache, pelvic or hip discomfort, increased vaginal discharge or bloody show, passing of the mucus plug, difficulty getting comfortable or sleeping.

## **Danger Signs:**

Vaginal bleeding (other than small amounts of dark brown or pink tinged with mucous), severe headache or visual changes, sudden onset of swelling in the hands and face, decreased fetal movement, or severe or constant abdominal pain.

## **When You Think You May Be In Labor:**

**Labor patterns** vary from person to person, and depending on how many pregnancies you have had, contractions may begin as mild and irregular. When labor begins, you will note that the contractions become more regular, frequent, and increase in intensity often becoming painful. They will continue despite changes in your position or activity. For your first labor, you should call at 4-1-1, four minutes apart, lasting for a minute and that has been going on for an hour. Subsequent labor contractions can be farther apart and shorter duration and still cause cervical change. So call when they become intense and regular even if that is ten minutes apart.

**Rupture of the membranes** (bag of water) may occur before labor begins or in labor. If you have a gush or a steady trickle of clear or greenish tinged watery fluid from the vagina, call the office telephone number day or night.

**In early labor** it is best if you try to keep busy and distracted from the contractions as long as possible. Rest if you are able. Sometimes taking a warm bath or shower is comforting. Drink lots of liquids and eat lightly if you are hungry. Begin timing the contractions when you can no longer ignore them.

**When to call:** You should call if you think your membranes (bag of water) has ruptured, if your baby is not moving normally, contractions are 4 minutes apart, or if you are experiencing any of the danger signs. If you are not sure if you should call or not, please call anyway!

**How to call:** You should always call the office where you get your prenatal care, if you have any questions or concerns. Monday - Friday you will speak with the staff, office nurse or your provider if needed. On weekends, holidays and evenings you will be connected with the answering service. They will take your information and page the provider on call to contact you. If you do not hear from someone in 15-20 minutes, please call back.

**Where to go:** When you get to the hospital, you may park in the visitor garage, or for a short time in the Emergency Room parking lot. Labor and Delivery is located on the 5th floor in the Needham building. Take the South elevators to the 5th floor. These are located near the Hoffman Breast Center. After 9:00pm and before 5:30am, you must enter the hospital through the Emergency Room doors. If you have any doubts as to how to get to Labor and Delivery, ask any hospital personnel for assistance.

**Remember, if you have any questions, please let us know!**