

When to call the hospital: advice in late pregnancy



the women's
the royal women's hospital

As your pregnancy nears its end, your body will start getting ready for birth. You can talk about these changes at your next clinic appointment, but some should be discussed with a midwife or doctor as soon as possible.

When should you call the hospital?

From 37 weeks of pregnancy, call us on **(03) 8345 3635** if you have any of these symptoms:

- your waters (the bag of fluid around your baby) break - this can happen before or after labour contractions start
- you have regular contractions that last more than 30 seconds and are less than 5 minutes apart, or you have 3 contractions in 10 minutes
- you need help managing your labour pain.

When should you go to the emergency department?

If you have any of the following, go straight to our **emergency department**:

- bleeding from your vagina without mucous. If the bleeding has mucous, it's called a 'show' and usually means labour is progressing normally
- you feel a change in your baby's movements, or you don't feel your baby moving
- you've been given specific instructions by the hospital to go to the emergency department
- abdominal pain that doesn't feel like labour
- a fever
- severe nausea or vomiting
- a persistent headache or blurred vision
- any other concerning symptoms.

Who should you call?

If you're having your baby at the Women's and need to speak with a midwife about any of these concerns, call:

(03) 8345 3635

Please don't call this number for general questions.

Are you in labour?

In early labour (also called the latent phase), your body starts getting ready for birth. If this is your first baby, early labour can last a few hours or even a few days.

During this time, you may feel irregular contractions. These help soften and thin your cervix (the neck of the uterus or womb), so it can open more.

Many people say contractions feel like intermittent period pain or cramps.

When should you go to the hospital?

You might need to go to the hospital more than once before your labour is fully established. This isn't unusual, especially if it's your first baby.

However, research shows that if you and your baby are healthy and your pregnancy is full term (over 37 weeks), it's best to stay at home during this phase of labour.

At home, you can enjoy the comfort of your own space. You're free to eat, sleep, and move around as you like.

But if you've been given specific instructions for your individual circumstances, please follow those instructions.





Listen to your body and do what feels right for you. Your experience is uniquely yours.

Do you need an interpreter?



Interpreter

You can ask for an interpreter if you need one.

Stage or phase of labour	Feelings	Symptoms you might have	Things that might help
Pre-labour <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cervix may start to thin Contractions may or may not begin. Usually irregular, mild, and short. May come and go for a few days. 	Excited, anxious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vaginal mucous with some blood Backache Mild pain, like period pain Loose stools (poo) Your waters break Feel tired. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep doing your usual activities Move around and stay busy Rest if you need to Drink plenty of fluids Eat normally if you can.
1st stage: latent phase Usually the longest phase. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cervix is 0 to 5 cm dilated (open) Contractions become more regular, with about 2 to 3 contractions in a 10-minute period. 	Excited, anxious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feel tired Vaginal mucous with some blood Backache Pain becomes more regular and stronger Loose stools Your waters break. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep eating and drinking small amounts often Move around and stay busy Rest if you need to Empty your bladder (wee) at least every 2 hours Time how long your contractions last - from the start of the contraction to the end of the contraction Call the hospital.
1st stage: active phase Usually shorter than the latent period. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cervix 5 to 10 cm dilated Contractions become stronger and more regular, with about 3 to 4 in a 10-minute period, and lasting 50 to 60 seconds each. 	Becoming tired, restless 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stronger pain Backache Your full focus is on labour Increased need for support Vaginal mucous with some blood Your waters break. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use deep breathing and relaxation techniques Focus Take a shower or bath – if it's safe - or use heat packs Change positions Rest between contractions Sip fluids or suck on sweets Consider going to the hospital.
2nd stage Can last up to 3 hours, depending on your pushing and baby's health. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cervix is fully dilated - 10cm 2 to 5 contractions in a 10-minute period, lasting 60 to 90 seconds. 	Working hard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contractions becoming spaced out Less intense pain More pressure in your bottom A strong urge to push A stretching or burning feeling as your baby's head moves down. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen to your body's natural urges Push with contractions - use a mirror if needed Rest between contractions Use a cool cloth or spray on your face and neck Listen to the people supporting you If you feel a strong urge to push, try panting. This can help slow down the birth of your baby's head It's good to be in hospital for this stage.

This information is a guide only. Everyone's experience of labour is unique.

Disclaimer: This fact sheet provides general information only. For specific advice about your or your baby's healthcare needs, you should seek advice from your health professional. The Royal Women's Hospital does not accept any responsibility for loss or damage arising from your reliance on this fact sheet instead of seeing a health professional. If you or your baby require urgent medical attention, please contact your nearest emergency department.
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