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Is it time yet?

# Labor is coming signs

Do not be misled, there is no way to predict just exactly when active labor will begin and not everyone has any or all the “labor coming” signs. Nevertheless, here are some things to consider as positive signs your body is gearing up for labor. Please tell your doula if any of these things happen:

1. The baby drops: You notice more pressure in your groin, you’re able to breathe easier, you feel the need to waddle, everyone around you says baby dropped, or your doctor informs you that baby is engaged in your pelvis.
2. You notice a significant change in your bowel movements: either you become constipated or you have much loose stools.
3. You lose your mucus plug. It is a sticky, booger-like, sometimes very long, sometimes in smaller pieces, cloudy colored, sometimes brown, sometimes with a little bit of blood.
4. You have period-like cramping in your lower abdomen, thighs, and/or back.
5. You just feel different, and some kind of instinct tells you it’s time.

# ACTIVE LABOR IS COMING SIGNS

* Many women (about ½ in my experience) have some on and off “practice labor.” This is when you have period-like cramping, sometimes pretty uncomfortable, sometimes very mild, that comes and goes and never turns into any kind of predictable pattern. Practice labor is usually (but not always!); cramping that lasts for less than one minute, cramping that mysteriously goes completely away no more then 2-3 hours after it started, cramping does not get close together (usually not any closer that 5-6 minutes), and usually isn’t intense enough to cause you to want to stop whatever you’re doing and breathe through it. Please tell your doula if you think you are experiencing this.
* Sometimes practice labor is really early labor, but because there’s no way to know for sure; it’s best to IGNORE it! Do not time the sensations unless you think they’ve made a significant change in intensity, duration, or consistency. Some women experience on and off again practice labor for a day, days, or even weeks. Yet, some women are actually dilating when it only feels like practice labor! Please describe what you’re feeling as much as possible while maintaining a peaceful patience and ignoring whatever is ignore-able.
* If you notice a progressive change in duration, consistency, and intensity, AND it’s been more than a few hours, it’s highly likely you are transitioning into active labor. This is when your doula needs to come. If you haven’t gotten to this state, she can also help you work through practice labor if it becomes discouraging and frustrating, and she can even help it become active labor in the right situation (for example, it’s a position-issue that’s limiting progression).



## WHEN ACTIVE LABOR ISN’T AS ACTIVE AS IT FEELS

### QUICK, INTENSE ONSET OF LABOR

If you’ve experienced a quick, intense, very consistent, sudden onset of labor and there was no-little progressive gearing up towards this feeling, it very well may be because you’re dehydrated. You will need to slow it down so that you can drink a lot of water (try Smart Water or Coconut Water for extra electrolytes). Get into the bathtub and submerge yourself up to your breasts (DO NOT SUBMERGE OR WET YOUR NIPPLES). This should slow it down and get you comfortable enough to drink a lot of fluids. If you don’t not have a bath available, just drink the fluids. Drink at least 30 oz of water. If this doesn’t work, it may be that you are experiencing a very quick (or possibly precipitous) labor. You should call your doula as soon as you experience something like this.

### FALSE ACTIVE LABOR

With loving understanding, I have witnessed many women bring on their own labor before it was time (including myself!). Maybe the practice labor was becoming so frustrating, or maybe they couldn’t seem to ignore early labor and sleep. Maybe, they tried every home-induction idea or maybe they had their OB/Midwife strip their membranes. It’s possible to make your body feel like it’s in active labor when your body was just very close to getting into active labor on its own. Unfortunately, this often causes intense discomfort and intense “surges” (contractions) with little – no dilation. Your uterus can even become irritable and contract very strongly without opening your cervix at all. This is usually because your body was denied the rest, hydration, nutrition, or oxygen it needed to make effective surges. If you think there is a stall in progress because of one of these things, or you sense you have rushed your body, please tell your doula. She will give you the emotional and physical support to help you get back to a place of rest and surrender to your baby’s timeline.

### SCAR TISSUE

If you’ve ever had a LEEP procedure, abortion, IUD removal, or any other cervical procedure, there could be scar tissue on your cervix. This cause the cervix to stop dilation at a certain point (usually not more than 4cm). Do not be discouraged, this can be solved. A practitioner can massage away the scar tissue, or after some time, it may just “pop” open. Once the scar tissue is gone, it’s common for things to move very quickly.