Ready, Set... Not Yet!

What Should I Expect in Early Labor?

At full-term (37-42 weeks):

Early labor is the very beginning of labor. Contractions generally start off mild and become stronger and closer together over time. It is the longest phase of the birth process. Be patient. Progress can be slow until your cervix opens to about 5-6 centimeters and active labor begins. Active labor is the phase when your cervix begins to open more quickly and your contractions are stronger and closer.

When Should I Call the Hospital?

- If your water breaks
- If your baby is not moving normally (fewer than 10 kicks during a two-hour period)
- If this is your first baby: When you have contractions that are difficult to speak through, are 3-5 minutes apart, and last a minute each over a one-hour period
- If you have given birth before: When you have contractions that are difficult to speak through, are 8-10 minutes apart, and last a minute each over a one-hour period

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Did You Know?

- Painless, irregular contractions are the way the uterus gets ready for true labor. This can occur hours to weeks before the big day!
- Contractions may start and stop several times before active labor begins.

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