



HOW CAN I TELL IF I AM IN LABOR

One of a woman's greatest concerns is "How will I know if I am in labor?" This is especially true in first pregnancies. There are several signs of labor or pregnancy emergencies that should cause you to phone your physician or head to the hospital.

The first sign of labor is uterine contractions. Uterine contractions are often described as tightening of the uterus or "balling up of the baby." These contractions should be of significant strength to cause you to stop a conversation and take several deep breaths. When contractions are 5 minutes apart from the beginning of one contraction to the beginning of the next contraction, contact your physician.

The second sign of labor is your water breaking. Some women notice a large gush of fluid, and some women notice a constant leaking of small amounts of fluid. In either case, you should report to the hospital.

The third sign is vaginal bleeding. If at any point you have bright red bleeding similar in volume to a period, go to the hospital. This is a medical emergency and may be a sign that your placenta is separating from your uterus. If you have a small amount of bleeding mixed with mucus, this is probably your mucus plug. You can lose the mucus plug at many points during pregnancy, but this is not a signal of impending labor.

Finally, if your baby is not moving normally, contact your physician. At a minimum you should notice at least 10 movements a day. Many people feel that you should notice at least 10 movements in 2 hours.

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