
Signs of labour

In the week building up to your labour starting you might experience some of the following:

- increased clear vaginal discharge
- mild upset stomach or diarrhoea
- feeling energetic or restless
- frequent practice contractions or tightenings of the uterus, known as 'braxton hicks' and/or backache

Some women won't notice any of these signs, and it is nothing to worry about if you don't feel any different towards the end of pregnancy.

As your labour starts you may notice some of the following signs, and this is what you can do:

Mucus plug (sometimes called 'show')

During pregnancy, a plug of thick mucus forms in the cervix, and as the body prepares for labour it may pass out through the vagina. This can happen one to two weeks before labour, during labour or sometimes not at all. It appears as a clear or pink/slightly blood stained jelly-like substance, and you might notice it once or on a few occasions.

You don't need to call your midwife about this unless you are worried, however if you notice that it is heavily blood stained or that you are losing fresh blood, call your maternity triage/assessment unit straight away.

Contractions

When early labour (the latent phase) starts, you may experience **irregular contractions** that vary in duration and strength. This can sometimes last for a few days, and it is important to rest when you can until they become regular. When your contractions become strong and regular, it may be helpful to **start timing them** (approximately how often they are coming and how long they last for).

If it is your first baby, you will normally be advised to come to hospital when your contractions are every three minutes and lasting for 60 seconds.