

Overview of Labor and Birth

Stage	Emotional Signs	Behavior	Physical Signs	Contractions	Sensations	Needs	Reminders
Early First Stage	First Emotional Signpost: <u>Excitement</u> “maybe this is it...not sure”	“Putsy, putsy” Anxiously cleaning, talking, walking, smiling...restless. May or may not want to talk during contraction.	May have bloody show or see mucous plug, have several bowel movements, need to urinate frequently	Generally 10 min apart or less, lasting 30-45 seconds, becoming progressively stronger and closer	May have strong contractions that peak about 30 seconds. May not be sure if contracting, but have cramping, pressure, back ache.	Keep busy and don't become too excited. Have someone with you. Eat and drink so you need to urinate every hour and rest between walks.	Walking helps open the inlet of pelvis. Adrenaline can slow or stop labor.
First Stage	<u>Acceptance</u> “This is it” Confident and Committed “This is a lot of work, but I can do it:”	Tries various positions/techniques to find what works best and is most comfortable. During a contraction needs to stop, but then she is ok.	May be hungry. May be able to talk or move during contraction, but it takes effort. Feels changes in body and settles into a pattern	Contractions becoming stronger and more frequent. Generally 5 minutes apart or less, lasting around 60 seconds.	Increasing pressure and fullness in pelvis, back ache, increased intensity of contractions	Support and reassurance. Coach should stay by her side. Freedom of movement, calm environment	Conserve your energy, do something fun and entertaining to pass the time. Patience....it may take a long time.
Late First Stage Hard Labor	Second Emotional Signpost: <u>Seriousness</u> The “do-not-disturb” and “get to work” attitude	Losing modesty. May still like to walk, but uses slow deliberate movements. May not want to move. May need to lie down. Deeply concentrating in a sleep like state.	No longer hungry. No longer talkative between contractions. May be sweating, bag of waters may break, becomes uncomfortable if disturbed, tenses up, or urinates	Intense and close, sometimes on top of another. Generally (not always) follow a regular pattern and last 60 sec or more. Increased pressure on bladder.	Hard work, intense, almost overwhelming, lose track of time, you must concentrate on staying relaxed, tensing causes pain. Pressure on pelvis.	Dim lights, comfortable temperature, freedom to move, peaceful environment, drink and go to bathroom often. Surrender, let your body take over	This is it! You are doing it! Relaxation is the key. Give your body the time it needs to give you your baby. Be patient. Labor is more than dialation.
Transition	Third emotional signpost: <u>Self-Doubt</u> “This is so hard, I'm tired, I can't take it, I give up”	Confused, unsure, scared, nervous, may want to go home, may move around a lot, may give up, may yell at you, may be handling things fine	May be sweaty, shaky, hot then cold, nauseous, may vomit, burp, have cold feet. Bag of waters may break if it hasn't already	May become irregular, may double peak, may come one on top of another, may stop completely for awhile.	Sensations change greatly often causing panic, disbelief, and fear. You may feel the baby shifting into alignment with pelvis...pressure.	Reassurance, encouragement, help relaxing. Do not disturb! Take one contraction at a time. You have reached a milestone and it will soon be over!	Remember: Transition may be the hardest part, but it doesn't last long and pushing feels different. The baby is coming soon.
Second Stage	<u>Calmness and Determination</u> Desire to complete the task and hold baby!	No longer modest. Either gradually or suddenly gets urge to push. Usually more alert and may become more talkative between contractions. Tired.	Mucous discharge and some bloody discharge, bag of waters may break if not already broken. Often she gets a second wind.	Change to expulsive type. May ease into stage by only pushing at peaks or get sudden urge to push. Usually more time between contractions	Wait for overwhelming urge to build then bear down. Usually feels good to push. A bit like having a huge bowel movement. Stretching, burning.	Encouragement, freedom to choose best position. May need some direction on how to push. Ice chips/water and relaxing between contractions	For first time moms it may take 2 hours. Squatting helps open pelvis. It is two steps forward one step back.

