

**LABOR PREPARATION**

# When You Think Labor Is Beginning

A calm, practical guide to timing contractions, recognizing changes, and knowing when to call.

**Public education only. This guide is not a diagnosis, medical order, emergency service, or substitute for individualized consent and clinical assessment.**

## Pause, notice, and gather information

- If you are unsure whether labor is beginning, note when each contraction starts, how long it lasts, and whether the pattern becomes more regular or more intense.
- If your individual care plan allows, drink water, empty your bladder, eat something light, and rest on your side for about 30 minutes. Notice whether the pattern settles or continues.
- Trust your instincts. You do not need to wait for a perfect contraction pattern before calling Julia with a concern or question.

## Call Julia when

- Contractions are becoming consistent in timing, length, and intensity.
- Your water releases as a gush or a trickle. Note the time, color, odor, and whether the baby is moving normally.
- You have bleeding beyond light spotting, decreased fetal movement, fever, severe pain, or anything that feels wrong.
- Your intuition tells you labor has begun, you feel you need support, or it is after 8 p.m. and you are wondering whether to call.

## Timing contractions

- Start the timer when a contraction begins. The interval from the start of one contraction to the start of the next tells you how far apart they are.
- Time how long each contraction lasts from beginning to end. Active labor contractions often last about a minute, but patterns vary.
- Track for 30-60 minutes unless symptoms require an immediate call. Do not let an app delay you from contacting your midwife.

## Before the birth team arrives

- Keep your phone nearby and charged.
- Make sure the birth team can enter the home; unlock the agreed door and turn on exterior lighting if needed.
- Gather the supply kit, towels, clean bedding, nourishment, and the completed emergency plan.



**Important: Call 911 for severe bleeding, trouble breathing, chest pain, loss of consciousness, seizure, a strong urge to push when the birth team is not present, or any immediate threat to life.**

## Further reading

- [American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists - How to Tell When Labor Begins](#)
- [American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists - Preterm Labor and Birth](#)

## Questions for your next visit

Use the space below to write questions, preferences, or details you want to discuss privately with your care team.

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