

Early/Prodromal Labor

Early labor is exciting! Your baby may be on its way. However, contractions can come and go over hours, days, and even weeks. Do what you can to temper your excitement. Now is not the time to get out of bed, notify friends and family, start playing music, or light candles.

Contractions further than 4 minutes apart and shorter than a minute are doing good things to prepare for labor but anything less is not yet active labor. The best thing you can do is ignore it.

Some strategies for ignoring early labor are:

- Go to sleep--especially if it is the middle of the night.
- Eat and drink to keep your energy up.
- Be active in the day if you have energy, but don't overdo it.
- Get some rest—even if you can't sleep.

Did we mention get some sleep?

If it is the middle of the night, and you aren't in active labour, the **ONLY** thing you should be doing is sleeping and resting. This will not be the best sleep of your life, but the rest you can get now will serve you very well down the road.

Tips for sleeping in early labour

- Take a warm bath in a dim bathroom, breathe deeply and get into as trance-like a state as possible. Then get out, don't talk to anyone, dry off and slide into bed.
- A warm pack on your lower belly can help.
- Warm milk or calming tea, with or without a tincture of poppy or valerian, can help.
- If you're not prone to heartburn and it sounds helpful, you can try a small beer or glass of wine, with the plan to hit the bed as soon as you feel drowsy.
- Dramamine (50-100mg) every 4 - 6 hours may help you doze in between contractions.

Frustration is your worst enemy. Try to stay relaxed and be grateful for whatever rest you can get—even if it isn't perfect. Rest is nearly as good as sleep and is better than being up all night. Visualize your baby in its little nest and focus on sending calming energy. Visualize your smooth birth. Pray, meditate, or breathe deeply.

Timing contractions

Contractions are measured from the start of one contraction to the start of the next. As you jot the time down, note the length beside it. ***Time a few contractions every so often, or whenever there is a noticeable shift in the labor, not continuously.***

It's Labor!

4-1-1 is the start of the race, not the finish line. Pace yourself.

A twelve-hour active labor translates to roughly 180-200 contractions. 8 or 9 hours of that time will be "between contractions" so make use of the rest you can get during that time!