

When to Call in Labor

One of the most common questions an expectant family has when the due date draws near is “when do we call the midwife”? Many excited dads jump at the first contraction, eager for their baby to make its way into the world – without a full understanding of the length of time the average mother will likely be in labor. Although it can happen, labor is rarely a rushed thing.

If you think labor is beginning but aren't sure:

A “heads up” for the midwife is always nice – but for this period of time in which contractions are still manageable it is usually best to rest, eat healthy snacks, enjoy your breaks and the knowledge that your baby might be born soon! Consider calling your midwife if you lose your mucus plug, have ‘bloody show’, or if you have noticed that your contractions have begun to get stronger/longer/closer together – but aren't feeling very intense yet.

If you KNOW that labor is here:

There is a shift that happens in labor where it starts to become hard work – contractions are powerful and closer together (usually 4-5 minutes from the START of one to the START of the other) and lasting longer (60+ seconds) and are very strong in intensity requiring a lot of work and concentration to get through them. This is usually when your midwife will be coming to your home for a birth!

The average first time labor is 24 hours and is usually the most challenging birth. It's a great idea to hire a Doula for your first birth. Subsequent labors tend to be much quicker.

When do we call you:

I encourage you to call whenever you feel you need to. Here are some basic guidelines if you are still not sure.

- If you think your water has broken (repeated small leak or a gush from the vagina).
- If you have any “bloody show” or spotting with mucus.
- If you are having contractions that are getting longer and more intense and are coming faster than 8 in an hour (7-8 minutes apart) consistently.

Remember that the intensity of the contraction is significantly more important than the timing of the contractions.
Spend more time paying attention to what you are feeling than the clock!