

# Great Neck OB/GYN SYMPTOMS OF LABOR

## Five Signs that Labor is Within a Few Weeks or Days:

### 1. Lightening:

This is an indication that the baby has dropped, settling deeper into your pelvis and relieving some of the pressure on your diaphragm, so you are not so short of breath. This may occur up to 2 to 3 weeks before you go into labor with first pregnancies and may not even happen until labor is in progress.

### 2. Bloody show:

During pregnancy, a thick plug of mucus protects your cervical opening from bacteria entering the uterus. When your cervix begins to thin and relax, this plug is expelled. You may notice a stringy, mucus-like vaginal discharge (clear, pink or slightly bloody) which can appear weeks or days before labor begins.

### 3. Rupture of membranes:

Your water breaks! Only 1 in 10 woman experience a dramatic gush of the amniotic fluid. Sometimes the amniotic sac breaks or leaks before labor begins. If your membranes have ruptured and you are leaking amniotic fluid, it will be an odorless fluid. This can occur with a sudden gush or a constant trickle. If you notice fluid leaking, or think that you may leaking, please contact our office.

### 4. Effacement:

Thinning of the cervix. Usually in the last month the cervix begins to stretch and thin. This process means the lower segment of the uterus is getting ready for delivery. A thin cervix will also allow the cervix to dilate more easily. The Braxton Hicks contractions or "practice contractions" you have been experiencing may play a part in the effacement process.

### 5. Dilation:

Opening of the cervix. Dilation is the process of the cervix opening in preparation for childbirth. Dilation is measured in centimeters or, less accurately, in "fingers" during an internal (manual) pelvic exam. "Fully dilated" means you're at 10 centimeters and are ready to give birth. Dilation may occur weeks before you actually go into labor.

### ***One SURE Sign Labor is Really Happening:***

**Consistent Contractions:** When you begin to experience regular uterine contractions, this is the strongest indication that you are in labor. These contractions feel like menstrual cramps or a low backache that come and go at regular intervals. Gradually, the aching or cramping becomes stronger and lasts longer.

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Type of Change	False Labor	Labor
<b>Timing of contractions</b>	Contractions are irregular; do not become closer together (Braxton-Hicks); do not become a pattern over time.	Contractions come at regular intervals; may get closer together over time; usually last 30 to 70 seconds.
<b>Change caused by motion</b>	Contractions may stop when you walk, rest or change position.	Contractions continue even if you walk, rest or change position.
<b>Location of contractions</b>	Contractions are often felt in the abdomen.	Contractions are usually felt in the back, coming around the front.
<b>Strength of contractions</b>	Contractions are usually mild; do not become much stronger.	Contractions increase in strength, develop a pattern over time.

## ***Call Your Care Provider When...***

Please call our office 24 hours a day if you have questions about labor or are concerned about your pregnancy: **516 466.0778**. In the event that you can't reach us through the answering service, you can always contact Labor and Delivery directly at North Shore Hospital: **516 562.4450**. We will help you decide if you should come to the office or hospital to be evaluated. Remember, if you have a device on your telephone to block incoming calls, disable it before you call. Otherwise we may not be able to return your call.

## **Common guidelines include:**

- ◇ Uterine contractions that become stronger and stronger. If this is your first baby, call when contractions come every 4 to 5 minutes apart for 2 hours. If you have already had a baby, call when contractions reach 5 to 6 minutes apart for one hour.
- ◇ Heavy bright red bleeding or bleeding with clots. Spotting can occur after a vaginal exam or after intercourse, but if the bleeding increases, is heavy or if clots are present, you need to be seen immediately.
- ◇ Fluid leaking from your vagina. If you think your bag of water has broken, call immediately. Please remember to tell us if your Group B Strept culture is negative or positive.
- ◇ Decrease in fetal activity. Eat, lie down and concentrate on the baby. If you feel fewer than 10 movements in 2 hours, call immediately.
- ◇ Severe or persistent pain or headache, unusual or excessive swelling of hands or face, vision changes and/or sudden weight gain (more than 1 pound a day for several days).