# **KEEP CALM AND LABOR ON!**

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### Know what to expect in early labor.

## OH BABY! YOU JUST HAD YOUR FIRST CONTRACTION. IS THIS IT? SHOULD YOU GRAB YOUR BIRTHING BAG AND HEAD OUT?

You may be in **early labor** – the phase that comes before **active labor**.

# WHAT'S EARLY LABOR LIKE?

- Contractions are getting stronger and settling into a regular pattern
- As contractions strengthen, you'll need to work harder and find a rhythm
- The cervix dilates to 6 cm to prepare for birth, as the baby moves down in your pelvis<sup>1</sup>
- Early labor is most often the longest phase, more than half of the total labor time

### THERE ARE BENEFITS TO STAYING HOME DURING LABOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE:

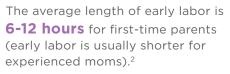


Gives you more **flexibility** to move freely—which can **reduce** the risk of medical interventions<sup>3</sup>



Helps **increase** the labor hormone, oxytocin—which **allows** the cervix to thin and open<sup>4</sup>

## **DID YOU KNOW?**



It may even last **24 hours or more**, which can be perfectly normal

# HOW CAN YOUR PARTNER AND DOULA SUPPORT YOU?







Offering comfort, physical care and reassurance

Helping time contractions

Keeping your mind off labor with simple activities, like playing games

# **STAY CONNECTED**

Resting and relaxing	Drinking plenty of fluids and eating what appeals to you	Going for a short walk	Moving around or changing positions	Focusing on slow, deep breathing	Using a warm pad or ice pack on your Iower back	Reading a good book or watching TV	Asking your doula or partner for a gentle massage
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HOW DO I KNOW WHEN TO GO?

Active labor begins when contractions are roughly 3-5 minutes apart, last 1 minute and have been that way for 1-2 hours.<sup>6</sup>

However, listen to your body. If you feel it's time to go to your birthing facility, ollow that instinct and/or call your care provider first, especially if your water breaks

# LEARN MORE ABOUT EARLY LABOR IN A LAMAZE CLASS, IN-PERSON OR ONLINE, SO YOU CAN BE PREPARED! VISIT LAMAZE.ORG TO LEARN MORE.



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