

Labor Flow Outline

Stages of Labor



First Stage Labor



The first stage of labor is categorized into 3 phases. Below you can review how each stage works and how your body works within each phase. Understanding the physiology of labor will help you and your birth partner better move through these phases as best as possible. First stage labor ends with complete dilation of 10 cm and full effacement of the cervix.

Latent Phase

The latent phase begins with the onset of regular uterine contractions. Contractions in this phase increase in frequency and duration. They can be mild in intensity. Surges can happen between 10-20 minutes apart and last 15-20 seconds. As this phase progresses, surges become more frequent at 5-7 min apart and 30-40 seconds in duration. At this stage, you may feel happiness, and excitement that the day is finally here. Do not be surprised if you find some anxiety and nervousness as well.



Active Phase

During the active phase, there is rapid dilation of the cervix from 6-10cm. Descent of the presenting part of the fetal head is also occurring during the later active phase. Contractions pick up in frequency and intensity to 3-5 minutes apart, and 1-1.5 in duration. Birth parent may need more support from their partner or birth team. And will require to become more focused on relaxation to cope with discomfort.



Transition

Transition happens between 8-10cm according to Dr. Friedman. However, this phase can vary from person to person. During this phase, you will notice contractions become irregular. Which in turn creates much confusion in the birthing person. Some symptoms during transition can be nausea, vomiting shivers, and cold sweats. Contractions are intense and duration and frequency are erratic.



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Second Stage

Second stage of labor begins with the completion of dilation to 10 cm and full effacement of the cervix. This stage is when the presenting fetal head reaches +1 station in the maternal pelvis. Leading the birth parent to have the natural urge to bear down. leaning into these urges can help with a more effective pushing phase. usually in this phase, the birth parent feels a surge of energy and can be more alert and assertive in their needs.

Contractions during this phase can vary from 3-5 min apart. Your body knows you need more time for rest in between the pushing phase. Surges can last 1-1.5 minutes in duration as well. This phase can vary in time from 30 to 3-4 hrs for first-time birthers. Your partners should ensure you are hydrating between contractions as well as resting, in preparation for the next surge.

Third Stage

After the second stage is complete and your baby is born. You will then birth your placenta. This is the organ that was created by your body to nourish your baby and provide them with all they need during gestation. This phase can happen after 30-60 minutes after birth. The birther may continue to feel contractions after birth as the uterus is working to expel the placenta.

During this time you have the option to leave the record intact with the baby until it stops pulsing and enjoy some skin-to-skin contact with the baby for bonding. Once the placenta is born. Your midwife will periodically perform fundal massage to feel for the firmness of the uterus to ensure it is contracting properly and prevent postpartum hemorrhaging.