

South Sound Women’s Center Labor Warnings

Please note, we cannot diagnose labor or ruptured membranes (water breaking) over the phone. If you think you are in labor, or your water is leaking, you will need to be evaluated at Capital Medical Center’s Labor & Delivery suite. See below for guidelines that only apply to patients at or beyond their 36th week of pregnancy.

Please notify the office if you need to go to Labor & Delivery at Capital Medical Center during the hours of 9am to 5pm Monday through Friday (except holidays). Our numbers are 360-705-1259 or 800-633-1877. After hours, please call Capital Medical Center Women’s Services @ 360-956-3587 to advise them you are coming in to be evaluated. This way, they can assess their staffing situation before you arrive.

You may have periods of “false” labor, or irregular contractions of your uterus, before “true” labor begins. These are called Braxton Hicks contractions. They are normal but can be painful at times. You might notice them more at the end of the day.

Guidelines

It can be hard to tell false labor from true labor. The table below lists some differences between true labor and false labor. Usually, false contractions are less regular and not as strong as true labor. Sometimes the only way to tell the difference is by having a vaginal exam to find changes in your cervix that signal the onset of labor.

One good way to tell the difference is to time the contractions. Note how long it is from the start of one contraction to the start of the next one. Keep a record for an hour. It may be hard to time labor pains accurately if the contractions are slight. If you think you’re in labor, call your doctor’s office or hospital.

Type of Change	False Labor	True Labor
Timing of contractions	Often are irregular and do not get closer together (called Braxton Hicks contractions)	Come at regular intervals and, as time goes on, get closer together. Lasts about 30–70 seconds
Change with movement	Contractions may stop when you walk or rest, or may even stop with a change of position	Contractions continue, despite movement
Strength of contractions	Usually weak and do not get much stronger (may be strong and then weak)	Increase in strength steadily
Pain of contractions	Usually felt only in the front	Usually starts in the back and moves to the front

The following are other signs that should prompt you to call or go to the hospital:

- Your membranes rupture (your “water breaks”), even if you are not having any contractions
- You are bleeding from the vagina (other than bloody mucus)
- You have constant, severe pain with no relief between contractions
- You notice the baby is moving less often