

When to contact your midwife or hospital?

Contact your midwife or the hospital when you are experiencing contractions which:

- Are always the same intensity: strong! Some women describe them as 'taking their breath away'.
- Are regular and five minutes or less apart and last about 45-60 seconds.
- If you think your membranes have broken and the waters have come away
- Any change in your baby's normal movements
- If you having fresh bleeding from your vagina
- If you are not coping well
- Or if you have any concerns, questions or worries

If you are invited to go into the hospital then take your bag with you.

However, if labour has not yet established you may be asked to return home. This decision will be based on the findings of a thorough examination.

Contact:

Birthing & Assessment at Middlemore

09 276 0044 ext 8350

Your local Birthing Unit where someone will always be happy to advise you:

- **Botany Downs** 09 534 6063
- **Papakura** 09 299 9102
- **Pukekohe** 09 237

References

NICE Guideline. Intrapartum care for healthy women and babies. Clinical guideline [CG190]
Published date: December 2014




www.countiesmanukauhealth.org.nz



Coping with the Early Stages of Labour

Information for Pregnant Women and Whanau

 COUNTIES MANUKAU HEALTH	Department: Women's Health Approved by: Director of Midwifery Owner: Midwife Educator	Updated: Dec. 2016 Review: Dec. 2019
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Women's Health Division

Early Stage of Labour or Latent Phase of Labour

There are some experiences that we know a lot of women have in the early stages of labour (often called the latent phase of labour). However, the onset of labour differs between many women.

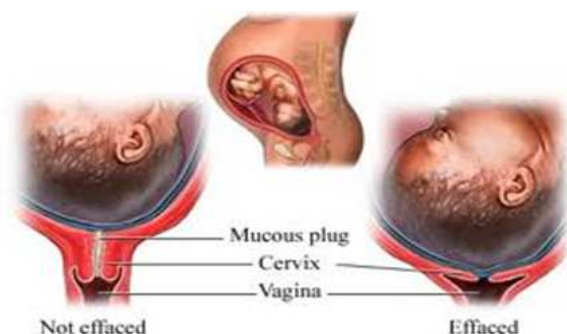
Labour can often take some time before it becomes well established.

- **If you are before 37 weeks pregnant and experiencing any labour symptoms, please contact your midwife or hospital urgently.**
- **Also if you have been advised to contact us early e.g. previous Caesarean Section, baby that is not growing well, previous quick labour See contact details on back**

See back page for contact details.

What is early labour (or latent phase of labour)?

Is the early part of labour. During this time the neck of the womb (cervix) shortens down and softens. This is called effacement.



Labour can often take some time before it becomes well established. The latent phase of labour can be **the longest part of your labour** and on average can last for 12-14 hours, but it is not unusual for some women to experience a latent phase of up to 2-3 days. This is perfectly normal.

There may be no or little changes to the cervix on vaginal examination (internal). The baby's head can also come further down into the pelvis.

How do I know I am in early labour?

There may be contractions at this point, but they are often:

- Irregular, short lasting and milder in strength than those in the later, active phase of your labour.

Some women will have:

- Backache and cramps or have bouts of contractions that may last a few hours and then stop and start up again the next day.
- The mucous plug (clear and sticky or gooey, sometimes with little blood) often becomes dislodged when your cervix begins to change consistency.

If there is ever **any bright/fresh red blood** (not sticky/gooey) on its own, you should **telephone your midwife or hospital straight away.**

The best place to be in early labour is at Home

The best place for you to be when you are in early labour is at home, most women want to have someone with them during this time. That person

can help by giving encouragement and reassurance.

However, feel free to contact your midwife/LMC at any time or if you are concerned about any of the symptoms you are experiencing.

What can YOU do in the early stage of labour?

Try to stay as relaxed as you can and distract yourself from focussing on the contractions. You can:

go for a walk

- have a relaxing bath or shower
- doing normal daily household activities
- have a nap – lying on your left side is best
- have a massage – ask your support person to do this for you. We do not recommend any form of massage of the tummy (abdomen).
- put a hot water bottle or heat pack on your back or achy areas
- watch TV/DVD
- eat and drink – it is important to keep your energy up

Paracetamol - it is safe to take simple pain killers (if you don't have an allergy to Paracetamol). You can take two (500mg) tablets, every 4-6hrs. Do not take more than 8 tablets within a 24hr period.

Continue to take any of your usual medications.

If discussed with your midwife start the use of a TENS machine, acupuncture or homeopathy, but it is important to follow her advice