

**Childbirth: when should you call?**

• These phone instructions apply between 37 and 42 weeks of pregnancy. If you lose amniotic fluid, have contractions or bleeding before 37 weeks, you should always call immediately.

• If you have regular contractions every four minutes for at least one hour (the contraction lasts one minute followed by a 3-minute break).

• If the membranes break at night and the amniotic fluid is clear, then you call in the morning. And if the membranes break during the day, you call immediately.

• If the membranes break at night and you get contractions every four minutes, of course, you do have to call.

• If the membranes break during the day or night and the amniotic fluid is green (not clear), please call us immediately.

• If you have more than one panty liner full of bright red blood. A little bloody mucus is normal.

• If you are having an outpatient delivery, do not go to the hospital by yourself. We will come to your home and go to the hospital together.

• If you are worried you should always call.

• In the last weeks of the pregnancy the baby should move like it did before. If you are worried about the amount of movements please contact us.

**What number do you call?**

**Childbirth: 06-21 53 10 10**

**If there is no answer and it is an emergency: 06-52 26 53 95**

**Tips**

• Try to seek distraction for as long as possible.

• Create an environment that is quiet and where you can concentrate.

• Postpone 'watching the clock' as long as possible, this makes giving birth seem to take days.

• At night, try to sleep as much as possible or to 'nap' between contractions. You do not know how long it will last and you certainly need your rest.

• A considerable time (at least half hour) in a hot shower or a bath does wonders for the relaxation.

**Contractions come in all shapes and sizes**

**Braxton Hicks contractions**

These can occur from the sixth to the ninth month. These Braxton Hicks contractions are a natural preparation for childbirth. A Braxton Hicks contraction feels like a hard stomach, like a football in the abdomen, or a cramp-like contraction. Braxton Hicks contractions occur because the baby kicks violently or turns, if you have a full bladder in the way, if the baby is growing fast and the uterus must stretch more quickly, with fast walking, standing up suddenly or lifting. Furthermore, it is possible that the uterus makes its presence felt through a Braxton Hicks contraction when under physical or psychological pressure. This is often a sign to slow down a bit.

For Braxton Hicks contractions, it can be relaxing to take a hot shower or bath. Just lying quietly (with a hot water bottle on the abdomen) also often helps.

**Labour contractions**

Can occur from a four to six weeks before delivery. The baby is then descending into the pelvis. This can involve extra hard bellies and possibly a pulling pain in the abdomen. This sometimes gives you the idea that labour is starting. You notice that labour has not started yet because the labour contractions do not get stronger and, after a while, stop again.

**Practice contractions**

In the last weeks of pregnancy, it is possible that the contractions of the uterus start to last longer and are more painful. Again, you can begin to doubt whether the delivery has already started. For practice and Braxton Hicks contractions, the womb does not yet contract in its entirety and the contractions do not take as long as with labour contractions. The breaks between contractions are long and irregular. Usually the contractions decrease over time and ultimately stop.

**The real work: the labour contractions**

As long as you still have doubts whether it is a 'real' contraction, it is not a contraction.

Then it is a Braxton Hicks or practice contraction during which the uterus does not yet contract completely. A real contraction comes with a certain regularity of, for example, every ten, five or three minutes. A labour contraction is painful and the pain is in your stomach, abdomen, back, thighs or a combination thereof. A good-sized labour contraction can last for three quarters of a minute to a full minute or sometimes longer. And usually, the stronger the contraction, the more is happening.