

The Labor Companion's Quick Checklist

Your partner is in labor. Now what do you do? Use this checklist to help with common labor and birth situations, and call her health care provider with any questions.

Important Information	Your Goals
Health care provider's name:	✓ Help her stay relaxed.
Health care provider's phone:	✓ Help her feel confident.
Hospital telephone:	✓ Help communicate her wishes and needs to her health care providers.
Hospital address/directions:	

How to time contractions

- From the *beginning* of one contraction to the *beginning* of the *next* is **frequency** (how often)
- From the *beginning* to the end of the *same contraction* is **duration** (how long)

Signs labor has started

- ✓ A nagging backache or "menstrual cramps"
- ✓ A blood-tinged pink mucous discharge, called "bloody show"
- ✓ A trickle or gush of fluid, indicating the amniotic sac is leaking or has ruptured
- ✓ Contractions that become longer, stronger, and closer together over time

When to call the health care provider or hospital

- ✓ Our health care provider says to call the clinic / hospital (circle one) at: _____ (phone number)
when this happens:

Typical instructions are:

- ✓ When water breaks
- ✓ When a new contraction begins every 3 to 5 minutes and each one lasts about a minute (in a first labor)

When to go to the hospital

- ✓ Our health care provider says to go to the hospital when:
- ✓ Typically with a first labor, plan to spend several hours to most of the day at home, working with contractions using distraction, relaxation, and breathing techniques
- ✓ Encourage her to stay home where she is most comfortable and can relax

How to work with labor at home

- ✓ Encourage her to take a bath, long shower, or nap to relax
- ✓ Fix her light, easily digestible foods: juice, soup, Jell-O®, toast, water, tea
- ✓ Encourage her to drink lots of fluids and suck on ice chips, Popsicles®, or a cold wash cloth
- ✓ Remind her to go to the bathroom at least every 2 hours
- ✓ Use hot or cold packs on her lower back
- ✓ Give her a massage
- ✓ Put on soft music or watch a favorite movie
- ✓ Rub or press on her lower back if it helps

When to start breathing patterns and relaxation techniques

- ✓ When she can no longer walk, talk, play cards, watch television, or be distracted during contractions
- ✓ Use any breathing techniques you want at any time

Once you are at the hospital

- ✓ Remember that the health care providers are there as a resource for you, too — ask for ideas and information
- ✓ Ask the staff where you can find ice chips, wash cloths, blankets and pillows
- ✓ Ask where you can find beverages and a restroom for yourself (Take breaks to eat, stretch, drink and walk around)
- ✓ Adjust the height of the bed so it's comfortable for you to massage and help her

If she:	Then you:
Seems restless, crabby, or upset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Suggest a change in position ✓ Try a new breathing technique ✓ Talk her through a relaxation technique
Gets lightheaded or dizzy, or has tingling in her hands and feet (she's hyperventilating)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Have her cup her hands over her mouth and nose and re-breathe her own air (or use your hands) ✓ Tell her to slow down her breathing ✓ Breathe with her at the same rate and depth ✓ Tap out a slow breathing rhythm on her shoulder
Cries, panics, is in pain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Stay calm ✓ Get through this contraction and then call the health care provider to see if you should go to the hospital ✓ Reassure her that you and the hospital staff will help her ✓ Put your face near hers ✓ Gently hold her shoulders ✓ Breathe with her ✓ Talk her through the contraction, step by step ✓ Make a plan together for the next contraction (a new position, a new breathing technique)
Feels she can't go on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reassure her that she is progressing ✓ Remind her of how far she's come ✓ Praise and encourage her ✓ Tell her to take one contraction at a time
Is monitored with an electric fetal monitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Remind her to change positions often (don't be intimidated by the machine) ✓ Don't watch the machine and forget about her
Has back pain or back labor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Press on her back where it hurts ✓ Massage her back with hands, tennis balls, or a paint roller ✓ Apply hot or cold packs ✓ Suggest she try the pelvic rock ✓ Remind her to change positions often (Good ones: leaning over the bedside table, leaning on birthing ball, standing, straddling a chair, side-lying, lunge)
Has a dry mouth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Offer her ice chips, lollipops, Popsicles®, water, juice, mouthwash, lip gloss, or a cool, wet cloth.
Feels hot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Use a cool, damp cloth on her face, hands, and neck ✓ Remove extra clothes and see if she wants to change into a lighter gown
Feels cold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ask for a warmed blanket ✓ Put on her socks and/or a heavier gown
Has leg cramps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Straighten her leg, push the toes and ball of her foot up toward her knee ✓ Put on leg warmers ✓ Encourage her to stand, if possible.