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LATENT PHASE OF LABOUR



ADVICE AND TIPS FOR WOMEN AND THEIR BIRTH PARTNER

This information has been written to help you recognise the start of your labour, and offer you advice and tips to help you through the very early phase sometimes called the latent phase of labour.

What is the latent phase of labour?

The latent phase is the very beginning of your labour and is a time when it is best to stay at home where you can relax and stay calm. We know that being relaxed in a familiar environment where you can rest, eat and drink is likely to make this phase of labour easier

REMEMBER. This is all perfectly normal!

This phase may last 24 hours or more and so it can be tiring for you and your partner.

Some women will have backache and cramps or contractions that may last a few hours which stop and start up again the next day.

What are Braxton Hicks contractions?

Braxton Hicks contractions are tightening of the muscles of the uterus which last for 30-60 seconds and may be several times an hour, several times a day. They feel a little like cramp, are irregular and usually don't hurt, though they may be uncomfortable and occasionally are strong and painful. They do not tend to increase in strength, frequency or length.

How can I tell the difference between Braxton Hicks and labour contractions?

Labour contractions are usually more regular, longer; they increase in frequency and are generally more intense than Braxton Hicks contractions.



What is happening during the latent phase of labour?

The muscles of the uterus start to contract and soften the neck of the womb preparing your body for active labour.

Your contractions may feel uncomfortable and last for 30-40 seconds. They may continue for several hours and may not be regular. Sometimes they stop and start. This 'stop-start' pattern is common in the latent phase. This is normal.

How can I help myself through early labour?

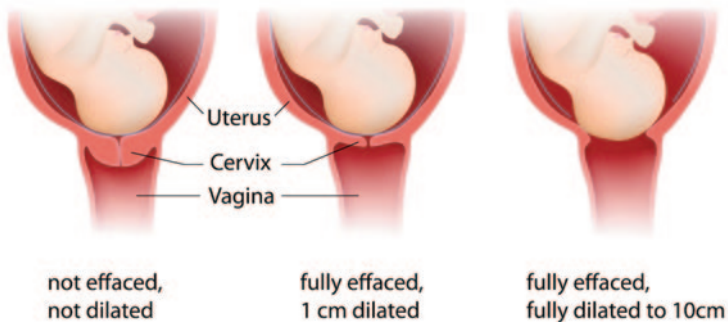
It is important to stay calm and feel that you are in a safe space during early labour, however it is very natural to be anxious and nervous at the start of your labour. Remember, you are not alone.

REMEMBER. You are not alone. You can telephone a midwife at any time to ask for advice

The hormone oxytocin is produced in labour and its role is in making contractions become longer, stronger and more frequent.

It is also known as the hormone of love and connection and so oxytocin levels can be affected if you feel frightened and anxious and raised if you feel supported and nurtured.

Cervical Effacement and Dilatation



Here are some tips to help you through this phase of labour

Choose a supportive birth partner who can be with you throughout your labour. They can:-

- Offer praise and encouragement.
- Give you cuddles.
- Keep you company and keep you cheerful.
- Keep you active.
- Get you drinks.
- Offer a massage.

At night, try and sleep as much as you can.

Potter around the house - keep active.

Go for a walk.

Watch a DVD.

Have a warm bath or shower.

Have a nap.

Eat and drink normally.

You need energy for labour.

Do some relaxation.

Keep your breathing quiet and fluid - try breathing in gently and sighing out slowly.



Remember that you can **phone at any time**. We are very happy to listen to you and give you advice day or night.

Community Midwife Mon-Fri 9.00am - 5.00pm

Tirion Birth Centre - Open 24 hours - 01443 443524

Tair Afon Birth Centre - Open 24 hours - 01685 726379

Acute Admissions Unit (POW) - 01656 753652

Labour Ward Princess of Wales Hospital - 01656 752383

Triage (PCH) - 07468 719941

Labour Ward Prince Charles Hospital - 01685 728870