

# 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.

Health care provider's name: _____ Health care provider's telephone: _____ Hospital telephone: _____ Hospital address & directions: _____ _____ _____	<b>Your goals:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Help her stay relaxed.</li><li>■ Help her feel confident.</li><li>■ Help communicate her wishes and needs to her health care provider.</li></ul>
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## 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 mucus 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 go to the hospital when \_\_\_\_\_

- Typically with a first labor, plan to spend several hours to most of a day at home, working with contractions using distraction, relaxation, and breathing techniques.
- Encourage her to stay home as long as possible where she is most comfortable and can relax.

## How to work with labor at home

- Encourage her to take a long shower or a nap to relax.
- Fix her light, easy-to-digest foods: soup, Jell-O®, toast.
- Encourage her to drink lots of fluids, such as juice, water and tea, or suck on Popsicles®.
- 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

- Start when she can no longer walk, talk, play cards, watch television, or be distracted during contractions.
- Use any breathing technique you want at any time.

## Once you are at the hospital

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

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