

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: _____	Your goals are to help:
Health care provider's telephone: _____	
Hospital telephone: _____	
Hospital website: _____	
Hospital address: _____	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ your partner stay relaxed ■ your partner feel confident ■ communicate wishes and needs to your partner's health care provider.

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 may have 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 or when a new contraction that mom needs to breathe through 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 tub bath or a nap to relax.
- Fix her light, easy-to-digest foods: soup, Jell-O®, toast.
- Encourage her to drink lots of liquids, 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. Rub or press on her lower back if it helps.
- Put on soft music or watch a favorite movie.

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.

(over)

If your partner:	Then you:
seems restless, crabby or upset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Suggest a change in position. ■ Try a new breathing technique. ■ Talk your partner through a relaxation technique.
gets lightheaded or dizzy, or has tingling in their hands and feet (your partner is hyperventilating)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Have your partner cup their hands over their mouth and nose and breathe their own air (or use your hands). ■ Tell your partner to slow down their breathing. ■ Breathe with your partner to keep their breathing even and easy. ■ Tap out a slow breathing rhythm on your partner's 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 your partner that you and the hospital staff will help your partner. ■ Put your face near your partner's face. ■ Gently hold your partner's shoulders. ■ Breathe with your partner. ■ Talk your partner through the contraction, step by step. ■ Make a plan together for the next contraction (a new position, a new breathing technique).
feels they can't go on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reassure your partner that they are progressing. ■ Remind your partner of how far they have come. ■ Praise and encourage your partner. ■ Tell your partner to take one contraction at a time.
is monitored with an electronic fetal monitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Remind your partner to change positions often (don't be intimidated by the machine). ■ Don't watch the machine. If you do, you may forget about your partner!
has back pain or back labor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Press on your partner's back where it hurts. ■ Massage your partner's back with your hands, tennis balls or a paint roller. ■ Apply hot or cold packs. ■ Suggest your partner try the pelvic rock. ■ Remind your partner 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 your partner 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 your partner's face, hands and neck. ■ Remove extra bedclothes and see if your partner wants to change to a lighter gown.
feels cold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ask for a warmed blanket. ■ Put on your partner's socks, a heavier gown or both.
has leg cramps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Straighten your partner's leg, push the toes and ball of their foot up toward their knee. ■ Put leg warmers on your partner. ■ Encourage your partner to stand, if possible.