



FIRST TRIMESTER

How to time contractions: The 5-1-1 rule and what it really means

In the late stages of pregnancy, understanding your contractions can feel daunting. This guide breaks down the 5-1-1 rule, helping you identify when to head to the hospital. Use the included checklist to monitor your contractions effectively and feel more prepared for the big day.

A free guide from maternity.app

As you approach your due date, knowing how to time your contractions can feel overwhelming. This guide explains the 5-1-1 rule, so you'll know when it's time to head to the hospital.

Understand the 5-1-1 rule.

The 5-1-1 rule is a straightforward way to assess whether you're in active labor. It means your contractions come every **5 minutes** (or less), last for a full **1 minute**, and follow this pattern for at least **1 hour**.

Contraction Timing Checklist.

- ☐ Press start on your timer when a contraction begins, and press it again when the next one starts (frequency).
- ☐ Track how long a contraction lasts from the first tightening feeling until it fades away (duration).
- ☐ Assess if you're able to talk through a contraction; you shouldn't be able to during active labor.
- ☐ Watch for a pattern. Don't rush to the hospital for a single sharp cramp.
- ☐ Take note of an increase in contraction intensity and regularity as time passes.
- ☐ Pay attention to any changes in fetal movement or water breaking.

Know when to call your doctor.

It's essential to contact your OB/GYN or midwife right away if you meet the 5-1-1 criteria, your water breaks (especially if it's green or brown), you experience bright red vaginal bleeding, or you notice a sudden drop in fetal movement.

IMPORTANT: DON'T WAIT TOO LONG

If you're unsure, always call your healthcare provider. It's better to be safe than sorry!

Prepare for the hospital.

Pack your hospital bag ahead of time so you're ready when the moment arrives. Include essentials like your ID, insurance card, and anything you want for comfort.

You've got this! Knowing the signs of active labor and tracking your contractions can help ease your mind and prepare you for your baby's arrival.