



FIRST TRIMESTER

Reading Active Labor Beyond Just Contractions

Understanding the signs of active labor goes beyond just timing your contractions. This guide helps you recognize the physical and behavioral cues your body provides as labor progresses, ensuring you feel prepared and confident.

A free guide from maternity.app

Recognizing the signs of active labor isn't just about timing contractions. Your body communicates important signals that can guide you in understanding labor's progression. Knowing these signs helps you feel more empowered during this transformative experience.

Listen to Your Body's Signals.

- **Labor Companion shift.** In early labor, you can talk through contractions. In active labor, focus becomes internal, and you breathe through each wave.
- **Involuntary vocalization.** You may find yourself making low, guttural sounds as contractions intensify. This helps release pelvic tension.
- **Spontaneous nesting or pacing.** Feelings of restlessness may arise. Moving, swaying, or changing positions may help your baby's descent.
- **Gastrointestinal clearing.** Watch for sudden diarrhea, nausea, or vomiting. These are signals that your body is preparing for birth.

Active Labor Signs Checklist.

- ☐ The Labor Companion shift is evident; you're focused and silent during contractions.
- ☐ You experience involuntary vocalizations: deep moans or rhythmic sounds.
- ☐ You feel a strong urge to nest, pace, or change positions frequently.
- ☐ You notice gastrointestinal symptoms like nausea or diarrhea.
- ☐ You experience a change in the bloody show; pink or brown-tinged mucus may appear.
- ☐ You feel deep internal concentration, sometimes referred to as 'labor land.'

Understanding the Hormonal Shift.

As your cervix dilates past 6 centimeters, your body undergoes significant hormonal changes. Massive surges of oxytocin are released, enhancing contractions while endorphins help manage pain. This transition can make everything around you feel distant.

IMPORTANT TO NOTE

Pay attention to the signs your body sends. Recognizing them early can help you feel more in control and ensure you're prepared for the next steps.

Communicate with Your Provider.

Don't hesitate to reach out to your doctor or midwife if certain signs arise, like bright red bleeding or a

sudden pressure in your rectum. These could indicate that your baby is descending into the birth canal.

Trust yourself and your instincts. Every birth journey is unique, and knowing what to look for can help you navigate this incredible process with confidence.