



Birth

Contact

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WHEN DOES THE BIRTH BEGIN?

We consider the birth to be on time if it begins between the 37th and 42nd week of the pregnancy. This means from three weeks before until two weeks after the calculated date of the birth. Most deliveries occur between one week before and one week after the calculated date.

HOW DOES THE BIRTH START?

Signs

These are: the loss of bloody, slimy material from the vagina. This may mean the start of the birth, but it isn't always the case. It is a sign that the cervix is getting ready. You may lose this bit of slime as early as two weeks before the birth, or as late as during labour.

Labour pains

Labour pains are painful contractions of the uterus, which cause dilation. During the pregnancy and especially towards the end you will have so-called Braxton-Hicks contractions. These are also contractions of the uterus, but they are usually painless. They are a normal occurrence and we do not call them labour pains. Towards the very end of the pregnancy, during the period when you can expect the baby, these Braxton-Hicks contractions will be replaced by pre-labour contractions. Pre-labour contractions can be painful. They are important, however, because they make the cervix supple, so that it can be pushed open by the real labour pains later on. The pre-labour contractions may last as long as a week. Their strength and painfulness may vary.

It is often difficult to establish where pre-labour pains end and real labour pains begin. As long as you are still in doubt, you probably don't have real labour pains. You shouldn't think therefore that the birth has started at the first contraction. And certainly don't wait for the next contraction with a stopwatch in your hand. The contractions may even die down again. During the pre-labour stage it is best to find something to distract you, or, if it's night, to just go to sleep. If the labour pains continue you will notice that they are becoming very painful and that you have to concentrate to undergo them. When that happens it is better to avoid distractions. Pull the plug from the phone and from the doorbell and choose a spot in your house which is quiet and nice and warm, so that you can concentrate. Now is also the time to let someone keep an eye on the clock to see how fast the contractions follow each other. First they may come every 10 minutes and later every 8 minutes, perhaps now they will come every 5 or 6 minutes. After a while the contractions will follow each other faster, become longer and more powerful, until you have contractions every 2-3 minutes which are very powerful (and therefore very painful), and which last over one minute.

When you are having your first baby, we want you to call us when the contractions have been coming every 3-5 minutes for one hour, last for one minute and are really painful. If you are having your second (or third, etc) baby, we want you to call when the contractions come every 5 minutes and last one minute. Of course it is possible to call us earlier than that if you think that it is necessary (for example because your previous delivery went very fast). In any case make sure that we can call you back when you contact us.

The breaking of the membranes/amniotic sac

Most of the time your water will break when you have had contractions for quite some hours and there is some dilation. However, in 10 % of the cases your water breaks while you still don't feel anything else at all. The only thing you will then notice is that you lose some fluid.

Normal amniotic fluid is colorless, as clear as water. Sometimes it comes out together with a bit of slime; it may also be a bit pinkish because sometimes the amniotic fluid is mixed with a bit of blood. Most of the time you can see white flakes floating in it (this is the baby's sebum). When you notice

that you are losing amniotic fluid, you should always look at the color. If it is indeed clear with a few flakes, or a bit pink AND if you have been told by the midwife that the baby's head is engaged, you can put on some clean clothes (or change your sheets, it often happens at night) and simply continue what you were doing. So if it is night: just go back to sleep. It can be 24 hours or more before the contractions begin. The next morning you should give us a call to let us know your waters have broken. If the membranes break during daytime: please give us a call.

If the amniotic fluid has a normal color, but you have been told by the midwife that the baby's head is not engaged, you must, if you can, lie down immediately and call us. If this isn't possible, for example because you are in a supermarket, go home directly (no running), lie down and call us. This is because it could happen that when the waters break, something (for example the umbilical cord) slides down to the baby's head. This is not supposed to happen and when you call us we will come round as soon as possible to establish whether something like this has happened. More often than not everything is ok and you will be told that you can walk around again (which is just as well if you are having contractions).

The amniotic fluid can also be green, yellow or brown. This means that the baby has had a bowel movement (the first bowel movement of the baby, called meconium, is dark green in color). It could be a sign that your baby is or has been having trouble, so in that case you must call us immediately. We will then come to your house to examine the amniotic fluid and listen to the baby's heart. Usually we move the birth to the hospital.

Never go to the hospital without contacting us first, they will send you back. Normally we visit you first at home and decide later (if necessary) to go to the hospital.

WHAT ELSE MIGHT HAPPEN?

In some (exceptional) cases it may happen that you lose a lot of blood. With this we mean more than a normal menstruation. This is a reason to contact us immediately.

NECESSITIES FOR THE BIRTH AND CONFINEMENT

The following items are necessary whether you have the baby at home or in the hospital. If you receive a maternity kit from your insurance company please check whether it contains these items. If this is not the case, or if you do not receive a maternity kit you will have to buy them yourself.

- Packet of cotton wool (zigzag)
- Packet of maternity sanitary towels and a packet of regular sanitary towels (without Plastic - Kotex)
- Soap dispenser
- Umbilical clamp
- At least 6 maternity mattresses
- 2 or 3 boxes of sterile gauze (small)
- 10 large pieces of gauze (10 by 10 cm)
- bottle of alcohol 70 %

You should also buy or have ready the following items:

- Blocks or crates to make the bed (from 37 weeks pregnancy). You can rent blocks from the home care lending service tel: 0900 – 8 26 27 28 (vitaal Thuiszorgwinkel, Zamenhofdreef 95, Utrecht). You will also need them during the week after the birth!
- Bedpan, available from the home care lending service
- Bottle or small watering can for rinsing
- Thermometer; digital, no ear thermometer

- 1 or 2 metal hot water bottles (HEMA)
- At least 6 hydrophilic diapers (to dry the baby with, so you should buy them even if you are planning to use disposable nappies)
- 2 plastic buckets
- at least 2 thick gray rubbish bags

What to have ready in case you need to go to the hospital:

- Night shirt or t-shirt to give birth in
- Toiletries (toothbrush, soap, shampoo etc)
- Pair of slippers
- Thick socks
- Clean nightshirt
- Clean underwear (several large stretch underpants)
- Clothes for the baby (incl. a hat for the baby)
- Car seat for the baby, and warm blanket or suit
- 0,20 cents and 1 euro for a wheelchair
- Your pregnancy card and a hospital card (if you have one already)
- Photo camera, video camera (remember the batteries)
- Something to eat, a snack

WHEN SHOULD YOU CALL US?

- When the waters break, the amniotic fluid is clear and the head is engaged: during the day call us immediately, or if it happens at night, call us the following day.
- When the waters break, and the head is not engaged: check the color of the amniotic fluid, lie down and immediately call the midwife, even if it's night.
- When the waters break, the amniotic fluid is yellow, green or brown: immediately call the midwife, even if it's night.
- If you're having your first baby and you've had regular contractions every 3-5 minutes for one hour. The contractions should last a minimum of one minute and be painful.
- If you're having your second (or third. etc) baby and you've had regular contractions (every 5 minutes) or you think you are in labor.
- If you lose a lot of blood.
- If you are worried.

HOW SHOULD YOU CONTACT US?

- We are always available on (06) 49 777 349, also during the night and in weekends!
- The phone will be answered by the midwife on duty.

If there's no reply and you can wait 15 minutes, please try again after 15 minutes. Sometimes we are busy.

If it is an emergency and you can't reach us: you should phone the answering service /'doktersdienst': (0900) 15 15. They will then page the midwife on duty, she will call you back.

PRACTICAL MATTERS

- Make sure you have a name-plate next to your doorbell, so that we won't wake up the neighbours by mistake.
- If you don't have a telephone, try to make an arrangement with the neighbours in advance, so that it is possible for us to reach you.
- Let us know immediately should there be a change of address. Please let us know as well if you will not be at your own address directly after the baby is born.
- Make sure that you have all the necessary equipment and products four weeks before the baby is due.