

How to tell when labour begins



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In the last weeks of pregnancy your uterus might start to cramp. These cramps may become uncomfortable or even painful as you get closer to your due date. These irregular cramps are called Braxton Hicks contractions, or false labour. One easy way to tell the difference is to time the contractions. Note how long it is from the start of one contraction to the start of the next one. Keep a record for an hour. Note that it may be hard to time labour pains accurately if the contractions are slight.

Usually, you do not need to go to the hospital as soon as your contractions begin. Ask your health care provider at what point you should call them. While you wait at home, try and get some rest if you can. Some women may find it more comfortable to walk around, or to take a shower or a warm bath.

Difference between False Labour and True Labour

Type of change	False Labour	True Labour
Timing of contractions	Often irregular and do not get closer together (called Braxton Hicks contractions).	Come at regular intervals, and get closer together as time goes on. Each lasts about 45-70 seconds.
Change with movement	Contractions may stop when you walk or rest, or may stop with a change of position.	Contractions continue, despite movement.
Strength of contractions	Usually weak and do not get much stronger (may be strong and then weak).	Steadily increase in strength.
Pain of contractions	Usually felt only in the front.	Usually starts in the back and moves to the front.