

Four Stages of Labor

- **Stage One**

The first stage of labor is called early labor. During this time contractions may be irregular and mild and feel like a backache or cramps. The cervix may be dilated 0-3 centimeters. This is the longest part of the labor. You may walk around, shower and find the contractions easy to deal with. Some people may request medication. Everyone deals with labor differently so it's important to know all your options by discussing them with your health care provider. This stage can take up to 12 hours if this is your first baby; with subsequent pregnancies the time is usually less. You may experience a bloody show or discharge as your cervix dilates. Your bag of water can break during any stage of labor.

The next phase is referred to as active labor where the contractions get more intense and closer together. The cervix dilates 4-7 centimeters. The cervix should dilate approximately one centimeter an hour. Some women request intravenous pain medication or an epidural at this time. Many women get medication and their labor progresses quickly as their body relaxes.

The next phase of labor is called transition. The contractions are stronger and the cervix dilates from 7-10 centimeters. This is usually the hardest, but shortest phase to get through, without medication.

- **Stage Two**

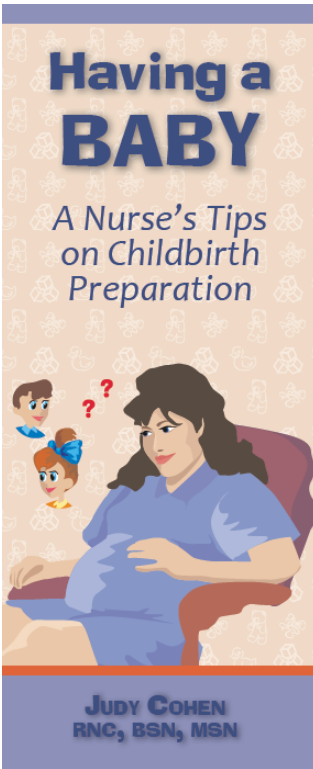
The second stage of labor is from 10 centimeters to the delivery of the baby. You may have pressure and a strong urge to push. If you have an epidural you may wait and "labor down" which is letting the baby come down until you have a strong urge to push. This stage can last minutes to a few hours.

- **Stage Three**

The third stage is from delivery of the baby to delivery of the placenta. This can take a few minutes to an hour.

- **Stage Four**

The fourth stage is the first few hours following your birth where your vital signs will be taken and you will be observed for bleeding.



*For more information, go to:
GetReady4Baby.com*

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