

Healthier Communities,
Outstanding Care



Sherwood Forest Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

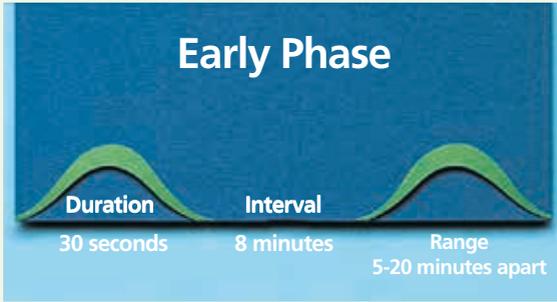
Am I in labour?



Definition of early labour is a period of time not necessarily continuous when:

There are painful contractions/tightenings and there are some cervical changes including effacement (shortening of cervix) and cervical dilatation up to 4 cm (NICE guidelines).

Early Phase



Duration
30 seconds

Interval
8 minutes

Range
5-20 minutes apart

0-4 cm



Cervix is 50% effaced and not dilated

Cervix is fully effaced and 1 cm dilated

Cervix is fully effaced and 4 cm dilated

Blueberry
1 cm

Cherry
2 cm

Lime slice
4 cm

What to expect:

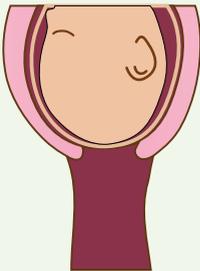
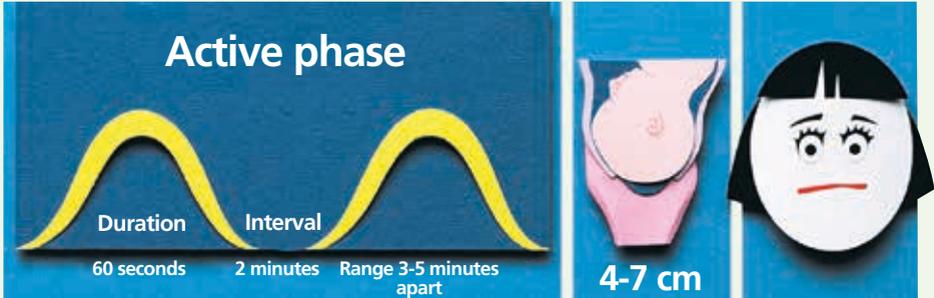
During this early stage of labour you may feel:

- Uncomfortable tightenings that are irregular and far apart that last for less than 40 seconds, these can last up to several hours or as long as 2 - 3 days.
- Period type discomfort and/or lower backache.
- Have a SHOW which is the mucus plug, this may have small amount of blood in it. All of these are normal, this means that your cervix is making changes to prepare for established labour.
- Tired and overwhelmed; this is also normal.

Please look at top tips on page 4 for further advice on how to cope at home during this stage.

Established labour when:

There are painful regular contractions and progressive cervical changes from 4 cm (NICE guidelines).



What to expect when you establish in labour:

- You will find tightenings become more uncomfortable and stronger; this has now become a contraction.
- You will have 3 - 4 contractions in a 10 minute period lasting up to 60 seconds, over a period of a few hours.
- It's important to use good breathing techniques to help you through.

Top tips for expecting mum and birthing partners

Pain relief - breathing techniques, warm bath, aromatherapy (available from your community midwife), massage helped by partner(s), TENS machine (available from your community midwife), heat compress for your back, paracetamol, distraction by watching TV for example.



Move around: On a birthing ball, short walk, dancing.

Hydration: Eat little and often with regular drinks of water, juice, sports drinks.

When to phone the Sherwood birthing unit:

- Once your contractions are regular, uncomfortable and/or feel you need more support.
- If you have any concerns with your baby's movements.
- If you feel your waters have broken.
- If you start to bleed.

Emergency Midwife phone: 01623 655722

Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions

Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

If you would like this letter or information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

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