



Homebirth Services in Central Vermont

Your Body's Preparation for Labor: Some Really Encouraging Signs

- **Braxton Hicks Contractions:** You've probably been experiencing them for a while now, but as you get closer to your baby's birth, they may increase in frequency and strength. They may even keep you awake at night and make you wonder if you're really in labor.

"How will I know if what I'm feeling is truly labor?"

It can be hard to tell sometimes, but you can try a few things to see if the contractions go away:

--Drink some water, eat something, take a long, warm shower, go for a walk/take a nap

- **Lightening:** Also referred to as your baby has "dropped." Around 2 weeks before labor begins, your baby may start to settle into your "true pelvis." This is the part of your pelvis that your baby needs to "engage" in to get ready for birth. You may feel that you have more room to breathe, as the baby has moved down and away from your diaphragm. Conversely, you may experience lightening as the need to urinate even more frequently, increased pressure on your perineum, leg cramps and increased swelling because the baby is lower down and putting pressure in different places. As uncomfortable as this may be, rest assured that it means your baby is preparing to meet you soon.
- **Ripening of the Cervix:** As a result of hormonal changes, Braxton Hicks contractions and other physiological factors, your cervix may begin the process of effacement and slight dilation before you even begin actual labor. Every little bit helps!
- **Bloody Show:** Sometime in the days before your body goes into labor (24-48 hours) you may notice some blood-tinged mucous has released. Unless you have had a vaginal exam or had sex in the last day or so (which can irritate the cervix, and cause some bloody "show,") this may indicate labor is coming up in your near future.
- **Rupture of Membranes: "I think my water broke!"** Truth be told, only about 12% of women actually have their membranes break before labor begins. However, when they do, about 80% of women who are near term go into labor within about 24 hours.
- **Gastrointestinal Upset:** One of the few times you may get excited about this. As labor gets very near, you may experience diarrhea, indigestion and/or nausea.
- **Energy Spurt:** Your labor may begin soon...don't start before you have to!

If you have any question in your mind that you may be in labor always call!

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