



Am I in Labour?

1. **I've had a show** – This means that the plug of mucous which sealed the neck of the womb (cervix) during pregnancy has dropped out indicating that the cervix is starting to soften and open. It's a very early sign of labour and you need to stay calm and wait for something else to happen!

WHAT'S OKAY?

The show is normally jelly-like and slightly pinkish because it is streaked with a little blood

WHAT'S NOT OKAY?

The show should not be accompanied by a sudden loss of blood similar to having a period. If you are losing blood freely, contact your midwife, GP or the hospital **STRAIGHT AWAY**

2. **My water's have broken** – Ring the midwife who is going to help you to give birth at home, or the hospital if you are going to give birth there and ask for advice. You will be asked the following questions:

- When do you think your waters broke?
- Did they go with a gush or did you simply notice that your knickers were wet?
- Have you had a show?
- What colour is the fluid you are losing?
- What does it smell like?
- Are you having any contractions?

WHAT'S OKAY?

The waters are normally clear or straw coloured and smell like very weak urine. You should still be happy with your baby's movements

WHAT'S NOT OKAY?

They should not be greeny-brown in colour, or foul smelling. If they are muddy, this probably means that your baby has opened his bowels in the womb which is often (although not always) a sign that he is distressed and perhaps needs to be born quickly. **You should call the hospital and go in straight away if your waters are green or brown or if you have any bleeding.**

3. **I'm having contractions** – Contractions may be the first sign that your labour has started – women don't always notice that they've had a show and the waters don't break, in the majority of cases until labour is well underway. It can be very difficult to know from the contractions how far on in labour you are, especially if this is your first baby. Contact your midwife if you are unsure about what to do. In general, you are in labour if contractions are regular, getting stronger, lasting longer and becoming closer together over time.

You can stay in touch with the hospital / your midwife – call if you have a question.

Go in when/if:

- Contractions are getting stronger, longer and closer together (lasting about 50 seconds to a minute*) and requiring your full attention** *although take into account how long it will take you to get to hospital!
- You feel you need to see a midwife**
- You need more help with the contractions**
- Your waters break and are green/brown**
- You don't feel right**
- You have any bleeding**
- If your consultant has told you to go in when labour starts**
- You don't feel your baby move as much as normal**

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