

LABOR INSTRUCTIONS

This is an outline that may help you during the last month of your pregnancy. Occasionally, some women will have irregular uterine contractions during the last month before labor begins. These pains are mild, last only 10 - 15 seconds, and usually go away in an hour or so. They will respond to a change in your activity, sitting or walking. These are called Braxton-Hicks contractions or false labor. True labor may begin with any of the following:

Ruptured Membranes or the bag of waters breaking, may be a sudden gush or a slow drip of water. It is usually followed in a short time by labor contractions. When your membranes rupture, you should notice four important things. The *time* it occurred. The *amount* of fluid that you passed, gush or “leak”. The *color* of the fluid is important to notice (clear, yellowish or greenish). The *odor* of the fluid (should not be any odor). When this event occurs, please call us, even if it is in the middle of the night!

Labor pains or uterine contractions start like menstrual cramps but are harder and last 30 - 60 seconds. They are 10 - 20 minutes apart in the beginning, usually in the abdomen, but may begin in your back. Time your contractions, noting how long they last and how far apart they are. If this is your first baby, call us when your contractions are **every 5 minutes, lasting 30-50 seconds, for at least an hour**. If this is your second (or more!) baby, call us when your contractions are every 6-8 minutes apart.

You may pass your mucous plug when labor begins or days before you actually begin labor. This may cause some spotting or mucousy discharge. If you notice active bleeding please call us right away. Otherwise, this is **not** an event that necessitates a call to the doctor.

When labor begins, you should have clear liquids only from that point in time. **No solids, no milk products, and no orange juice**. Clear liquids consist of water, tea or coffee without milk or cream, sodas, ginger ale, jello, or clear broth.

Don't forget your hospital bag and your labor bag! Please leave your jewelry at home since the hospital cannot assume responsibility for personal effects. Maternity bras should be packed if breast feeding is desired. If you have any questions or problems, call us at **703-370-0400**. The doctors may be reached day or night through this number. In case of extreme emergency, call “911” or Labor and Delivery at Alexandria Hospital.