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# WHEN TO GO TO HOSPITAL OR BIRTH UNIT

A CALM LABOUR  
DECISION FOR  
FIRST-TIME MOMS

CLEAR GUIDANCE FOR ONE  
OF THE BIGGEST LABOUR  
QUESTIONS

BY RONEL DODD  
REGISTERED  
MIDWIFE



## WHY THIS QUESTION CAUSES SO MUCH ANXIETY?

ONE OF THE BIGGEST FEARS IN  
LABOUR IS NOT KNOWING  
WHEN THE RIGHT TIME IS TO  
GO TO HOSPITAL.

GO TOO EARLY — AND YOU  
MAY BE SENT HOME.

GO TOO LATE — AND YOU  
WORRY YOU WAITED TOO  
LONG.

THIS GUIDE IS HERE TO TAKE  
AWAY THAT STRESS.

THERE IS NO EXACT CLOCK  
FOR LABOUR.

BUT THERE ARE CLEAR SIGNS  
YOUR BODY GIVES YOU.

## THE GENERAL RULE (FOR FIRST-TIME MOMS)

FOR MOST FIRST-TIME MOMS, IT IS USUALLY BEST TO STAY AT HOME DURING EARLY LABOUR AS LONG AS IT FEELS SAFE.

EARLY LABOUR CAN LAST MANY HOURS.

YOUR BODY WORKS BEST WHEN YOU ARE RELAXED AND COMFORTABLE.

HOSPITAL ADMISSION IS USUALLY RECOMMENDED WHEN:

- CONTRACTIONS ARE STRONG
- THEY ARE REGULAR
- THEY ARE GETTING CLOSER TOGETHER
- YOU CAN NO LONGER TALK THROUGH THEM EASILY



## THE 5-1-1 GUIDELINE (SIMPLE & PRACTICAL)

A COMMON GUIDELINE USED  
BY MIDWIVES IS 5-1-1:

- CONTRACTIONS EVERY 5 MINUTES
- EACH CONTRACTION LASTING ABOUT 1 MINUTE
- CONTINUING FOR AT LEAST 1 HOUR

WHEN THIS PATTERN IS  
CONSISTENT, IT IS USUALLY  
TIME TO GO TO HOSPITAL.

IMPORTANT TO KNOW: THIS IS  
A GUIDELINE, NOT A RULE.

YOUR BODY AND INSTINCTS  
MATTER TOO.



## OTHER SIGNS IT'S TIME TO GO

YOU SHOULD CONSIDER GOING TO HOSPITAL IF:

YOUR CONTRACTIONS ARE STRONG AND YOU NEED TO FOCUS FULLY ON THEM

YOU FEEL PRESSURE IN YOUR LOWER BACK OR PELVIS

YOU FEEL A STRONG URGE TO STOP MOVING OR TALKING DURING CONTRACTIONS

YOU FEEL CALM BUT VERY FOCUSED INWARD

LABOUR OFTEN BECOMES QUIETER, NOT LOUDER.

# WHEN TO GO IMMEDIATELY (DO NOT WAIT)

GO TO HOSPITAL OR CONTACT  
YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER  
IMMEDIATELY IF:

YOUR WATER BREAKS AND THE  
FLUID IS GREEN, BROWN, OR  
FOUL-SMELLING

YOU HAVE HEAVY BLEEDING  
(MORE THAN A NORMAL FLOW)

YOU FEEL REDUCED OR NO BABY  
MOVEMENTS

YOU HAVE SEVERE ABDOMINAL  
PAIN THAT DOES NOT COME  
AND GO

YOU FEEL SOMETHING DOES  
NOT FEEL RIGHT

TRUST THAT FEELING. YOU ARE  
NOT OVERREACTING.



***A CALM REASSURANCE FROM A  
MIDWIFE***

YOU DO NOT NEED TO RUSH.

YOUR BODY KNOWS HOW TO  
LABOUR.

YOUR BABY WILL GUIDE THE  
TIMING.

THIS GUIDE IS NOT ABOUT  
PERFECT TIMING —  
IT IS ABOUT CONFIDENCE,  
AWARENESS, AND TRUST.

WHEN IN DOUBT, CALL YOUR  
MIDWIFE OR HOSPITAL.

THAT IS WHAT THEY ARE THERE  
FOR.



## MEDICAL DISCLAIMER

THIS GUIDE IS FOR EDUCATIONAL  
PURPOSES ONLY.

IT DOES NOT REPLACE MEDICAL ADVICE,  
DIAGNOSIS, OR CARE.

ALWAYS FOLLOW THE GUIDANCE OF YOUR  
MIDWIFE, DOCTOR OR HEALTHCARE  
PROVIDER.