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## OBSTETRICS & GYNAECOLOGY

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## HELPFUL INFORMATION FOR OUR PATIENTS

You have now reached 36 weeks in your pregnancy. We have prepared some answers to some of the more commonly asked questions.

### How do I know when I am in labor?

You might experience irregular, painless or mildly uncomfortable contractions in your pregnancy, especially as your due date approaches. These are called Braxton-Hicks contractions. Labor pains feel different.

They are more intense, longer and stronger and will stop you walking and talking during a contraction.

You are in labor when these contractions are three to five minutes apart and last one minute long.

### When do I go to the Hospital?

If this is your first pregnancy, it will take a few hours for these strong contractions to dilate your cervix to three centimeters. This is the stage we call active labor and you will be admitted to a labor room at the hospital when your cervix is 3 centimeters dilated. You are not able to check your own cervix at home. A doctor or nurse checks your cervix to find out how dilated it is by doing an internal vaginal examination.

It is advisable and more comfortable for you to stay at home as long as possible so that by the time you arrive at the hospital your cervix will be 3 centimeters dilated and you will be admitted. If this is your second or subsequent pregnancy, go to the hospital when the contractions are 3 to 5 minutes apart as your labor is likely to be shorter.

### What if my cervix is less than 3 cm dilated when I arrive at the hospital?

You can go back home and wait a little longer. This is usually the more comfortable of the options. If you live too far or don't feel like going home, you can stay in the early labor lounge if there is space. In either case you can have some medication to help you sleep and make you more comfortable. We would usually offer you a sleeping pill to help you get some rest while you are waiting for active labor to begin. We can also offer you an injection of a narcotic such as morphine or demerol which are safe to use in early labor. These help to relieve some of the contraction pains and also makes you a little drowsy and helps you to sleep or rest until you are in established labor.



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### What can I do while I am at home to make myself more comfortable?

Keep on eating and drinking. Once admitted to hospital you will not get any more to eat but you can drink clear fluids like water or apple juice. Get into a warm shower or a warm bath (if your water has not broken). Find a position that is comfortable for you. Most women like a combination of walking for a few minutes and then lying down and resting. Get your partner to give you a back massage over your lower back with either their hand or a small ball.

### When I go to the hospital, who do I need to phone?

It is not necessary to contact the doctor on call or the hospital when you leave home. When you arrive at the hospital, the Admitting nurse will page one of the doctors on call for our group (which might be one of us!) to come and see you. Phoning us before you leave only makes things more complicated for you.

### What happens if my waters break?

It is not common that your waters will break before you are in labor. If they break you will usually experience a gush of clear fluid. This is more in amount than the usual discharge. Sometimes the waters leak and in this case you can experience an ongoing trickle of fluid which looks and feels similar to urinating.

If this is your first pregnancy and your waters have broken, check to make sure that the water is clear or yellow in color and that the baby is moving. If your doctor has said that the head of the baby has engaged, stay at home and wait for approximately 4-6 hours. During this time your labor will likely start and then come to the hospital when your contractions are strong and regular. If the water is green or brown or has brownish particles in it, this is meconium and could mean that the baby is stressed and you should come to the hospital straight away. The water might be tinged with blood, this is also okay, but if there is bleeding as heavy as a period, this is not normal and you should come to the hospital.

Once again, you do not need to phone us, just go to the hospital. If this is your second pregnancy or the baby's head is not in the pelvis, go to the hospital when your waters break.

If we have told you that your vaginal "Group B strep" swab is positive (usually done at 34-36 weeks), if your water breaks, please call the hospital and advise them of this. You



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will usually be instructed to come to the hospital for assessment and possibly antibiotics until you get into labour.

### What do I do if I see a bloody show or lose my mucous plug?

Once again, you will probably experience neither of these. A bloody show is some blood mixed with mucous and can be seen before the onset of labor. A mucous plug is not really a plug but a glob of mucous which is sometimes passed before going into labor. It can look yellow or green. If you see either of the above it means that the cervix is starting to thin and open. There is no reason to be worried. Continue with your regular activities while you wait for labor to start.

### What do I bring to the hospital?

Bring a pillow if you like, toiletries, a house coat, a pair of old socks, slippers and a copy of Baby's Best Chance or any of the books you have been reading concerning pregnancy and infant care. You do not need to bring underwear or sanitary products—these will be provided by the hospital. Pajamas will be supplied by the hospital but you may bring your own if you wish. You do not need to bring diapers for the baby—these will be supplied by the hospital, but do bring baby clothes, a receiving blanket and a car seat to the hospital as you will need this when baby goes home. Also bring cameras and video cameras if you wish (don't forget the batteries!). Bring your MP3 and speakers if you wish, or CD's of your own music. Optional items to bring include aromatherapy and massage oils.

### What do I do if I am worried or have a question?

If you feel a dramatic decrease in fetal movement or should you notice heavy bleeding, go straight to the hospital. If you have had a previous cesarean section and you feel a lot of pain over the scar, once again go to the hospital. If you have any other worries or questions, the obstetrician on call for our group can be reached by phoning my office any time of the day or night. If you have not been contacted within 30 minutes, please call again or go straight to the hospital.

We hope that you find this information helpful. Please let me know if you have any other hints or questions that you would like to be added.

Sincerely,

Drs. Selke & Fitzsimmons.