

What is the latent phase of labour?

The latent Phase is your body preparing for active labour; it may also be referred to as Early Labour. It is not always a continuous process and can start and stop. You may experience back ache, cramp or even a period of contractions that then settles until a later stage. This is normal and everyone's experience of this stage is different.

How long will it last?

The duration of latent phase is variable for each person. As mentioned before, it may not be a continuous process. We understand this can be very tiring. It helps to stay as calm and well rested as possible in this time. It is very important to keep hydrated throughout this time.

Please note: You can call the Maternity Assessment/Triage at any point for advice (see numbers for your local unit below).

What are these tightenings?

The tightenings that you are experiencing are most likely early labour tightenings, this is when the muscle of the uterus tightens (this can last 30-60secs and may be several times an hour, several times a day), they can be uncomfortable. This is normal. Your body is preparing for labour- your cervix has been previously long and closed, and this allows your cervix to soften and shorten- all vital preparation for active Labour.

How will I know the difference?

Your tightenings will change over a period of time, they will become regular in pattern, increasing in strength and you may find it a little more difficult to manage at home.

How can I help myself?

The latent phase can be challenging, but there are a few things you can do to help yourself along.

- Try to drink & snack, eating little and often will help to maintain your energy.
- Try and stay relaxed- breathing deep, steady and slow, Closing your eyes and trying to relax or even nap in between tightenings will help you to maintain your energy.
- Take a warm bath or shower; this can be done several times, as you will be naturally restless at times. The warm water relaxes your body and allows your body to calm or even continue to regulate your contractions.
- Mobilising and remaining upright will assist gravity to encourage your baby to descend into the pelvis. Birthing balls and support cushions can allow you to move in a steady regular motion e.g. Circling your hips. However, if you have an opportunity to sleep or rest we would encourage this.
- Your birthing partner can use massage and encouragement to help ease any anxieties.
- Using methods such as pregnancy TENS machines can help with this stage, as this increases your own natural endorphins- 'your body's natural painkillers'.
- You may also want to take paracetamol in line with manufacturers recommendations; this is safe in labour and may help you at this stage.

- You may wish to give us a call to discuss relaxation techniques

When do I phone?

You can call at **any time (24 hour service)**. We keep an electronic record of every phone call that is taken and advice that has been given to you. If your contractions continue for longer than 12 hours or you have any concerns, please call back for advice.

Please note: We would ask you to call us if any of the following situations change.

- If the frequency or intensity of your tightenings increase
- You think your waters have broken
- You notice your discharge change colour e.g. Brown, red, green, yellow
- You have a bleed that is more than show
- If you are finding it more difficult to manage your tightenings at home
- Your baby's normal pattern of movements change e.g. Slow down or increase. It is not true that babies move less towards the end of pregnancy. You should continue to feel your baby move right up to the time you go into labour and during labour. **DO NOT WAIT** to seek advice if you are worried about your baby's movement contact maternity triage immediately.

Useful telephone numbers

Royal Alexandra Hospital

Maternity Triage : 0141 314 6067
Community Midwife Unit: 0141 314 7033

Princess Royal Maternity

Maternity Assessment: 0141 201 3454
0141 201 3452
0141 211 5352

Queen Elizabeth University Hospital

Maternity Assessment: 0141 232 4363
0141 232 4377