

Labor & Delivery

Once your contractions are ten minutes apart, your doctor will usually instruct you to go to the hospital. If you have visited and toured the hospital

already, you will know where to go and you may have already pre-registered.

If you do not already know the hospital's procedures, go directly to the labor and delivery section of the hospital. You will be admitted to the hospital and then taken to the room where you will spend the rest of your labor. This room may be a labor room or a birthing room. If the room is for labor only, you will be moved to a delivery room shortly before the baby is born. If room is for birthing only, you will stay in this room when you deliver the baby.

After you get to your room, a nurse will ask you to put on a hospital gown. The nurse will then take your temperature and blood pressure, and will listen to your baby's heartbeat. The nurse may also perform an internal exam to check the progress of your labor. They may take vitals several times while you are in labor. If needed, an IV may be started in order to give you fluids and medicine. A nurse may also set up a monitoring device to check the baby's heartbeat and your contractions.

You can then rest while your contractions get stronger and your cervix begins to dilate. Labor can take as long as twenty hours or can be short - the average first labor is twelve to fourteen hours.

Most of the time is spent waiting for the gradual opening and enlargement of the cervix. Your first labor usually takes the longest, and the total time often shortens with each subsequent labor.

If the bag of water that surrounds the baby has not broken and the fluid has not leaked out, your doctor may break the bag to speed your labor. When your cervix has dilated all the way and the baby's head is beginning to push at the vaginal opening, you will be taken to the delivery room.

You may be placed on a special table or bed almost like the one used for a pelvic exam at your doctor's office.

Prior to the delivery the nurse will usually prepare you for delivery by washing your pubic area. Your doctor may perform an episiotomy (a surgical cut to make the vaginal opening larger) at this time. Now you will help push the baby out. When the baby is out, the cord is cut and the baby is wiped off and wrapped in a blanket. The baby may then be placed on your belly, placed next to you, or may be put into a warmer.

After the baby's delivery, you will push out the placenta. Pushing out the placenta does not generally require much effort. Your doctor will then sew up the episiotomy. You will then go to a recovery room to rest and be watched for several

hours. At the same time, your baby
will be taken to the nursery for observation.