

Labor Evaluation: Education

Kick Counts

It's normal to worry about your baby's health. One way you can know your baby's doing well is to record the baby's movements once a day. This is called a kick count. You will usually feel your baby move by the 20th week of pregnancy. Remember to take your kick count records to all your appointments with your healthcare provider.

How to Count Kicks

- Choose a time when the baby is active, such as after a meal
- Sit comfortably or lie on your side
- The first time the baby moves, write down the time
- Count each movement until the baby has moved 10 times. This can take from 20 minutes to 2 hours
- If the baby hasn't moved 4 times in 1 hour, gently pat your stomach to wake the baby up
- Write down the time you feel the baby's 10th movement
- Try to do it at the same time each day

When to Call Your Healthcare Provider

Call your healthcare provider right away if you notice any of the following:

- Your baby moves fewer than 10 times in 4 hours while you're doing kick counts
- Your baby moves much less often than on the days before
- You have not felt your baby move all day

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Recognizing Labor

The beginning of labor is the beginning of birth. You'll start to feel strong contractions. That's when the muscles of your uterus tighten up to help push your baby out during birth

Yes, Labor Has Probably Started If:

- Your contractions are getting stronger and more painful instead of weaker. You'll probably feel them throughout your whole uterus
- Your contractions are regular (you feel them about every 5 to 10 minutes) and they are getting closer together
- You have pink-colored or blood-streaked fluid from your vagina
- Your water breaks. It may be a gush or a slow trickle of clear fluid from your vagina

No, It's Probably Not Real Labor If:

- Your contractions aren't regular or strong
- You feel the contractions only in your lower uterus
- Your contractions go away when you walk or change position
- Your contractions go away after drinking fluids

When to Call Your Health Care Provider

- Call your doctor or clinic right away if you notice any of these signs:
 - Fluid from your vagina, with or without contractions
 - Bleeding heavy enough that you need a sanitary pad
 - You don't feel your baby moving as much as before

NOTE: Contractions are timed by both of these measures:

- The length of each contraction from its start to its finish
- How far apart the contractions are— the time between the start of one contraction and the start of the next one