



Commit to your health.

Wyoming Healthy Together Program
1-888-545-1710 | www.WYHealthyTogether.com



Labor and Childbirth: Active Labor

During active labor, your contractions will be stronger and more rhythmic than with early labor. They peak and subside like waves. They may occur 2–5 minutes apart and last about 45 seconds. This part of labor can be hard work. But it is often shorter than early labor. When you reach active labor, exams and tests will be done to see how you and your baby are doing.

Evaluating You and Your Baby

An exam tells how you and your baby are responding to contractions. Your blood pressure, temperature, and pulse will be checked. A blood or urine sample may also be taken. A fetal monitor will be used to check your baby's heart rate. Sometimes an **IV** (intravenous) line is started to give you

medication and fluids.

Moving Ahead with Labor

You may now feel contractions in the whole abdomen, instead of just the lower part (like during early labor). If your amniotic sac has not broken already, it may break now. Or, it may be broken for you. To help your baby descend, change position often. Walking or sitting in a rocking chair or recliner may help. You may find it hard to relax even though you are tired. You may also be less interested in talking than you were earlier. If you're having anesthesia, it will be given now.



Your cervix may dilate 4–8 centimeters during the first part of active labor.

Special Issues During Labor

If labor doesn't progress well or a problem arises, a cesarean may be needed. But certain steps may be taken first to help you avoid a cesarean:

- If your cervix isn't dilating, a medication called **oxytocin** may be used to increase the effectiveness of contractions.
- If fetal monitoring shows your baby isn't getting enough oxygen, shifting your body position may help. You may also be given oxygen through a mask.
- If you have **preeclampsia** (a condition that results in high blood pressure, swelling, and other symptoms), you will be given medications by IV. You may also be told to lie on your left side.

Responding to Contractions

During contractions, try to stay relaxed. Tense muscles use more oxygen, eat up your body's energy, and increase pain. Use the breathing and relaxation techniques you may have learned. And let your support person know how he or she can help. If you've had problems during a previous birth, focus on the present. Keep in mind that no two births are the same.