

The familyeducation® Contraction Timer Guide

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FamilyEducation's very own Contraction Timer Guide will help walk you through the process of timing your contractions so that you'll know when it's time to head to the hospital!

Note: You will need a stopwatch (it's probably easiest to use your phone) and somewhere to write down each recorded time!



First, Learn the 4 General Rules ...

The length of your labor and pain levels involved with your contractions will vary depending on whether or not this is your first pregnancy. **Keep these 4 facts in mind** when timing your contractions:

1

Each contraction's **duration** is usually **30 – 75 SECONDS** long at the start.

2

The period **between each contraction** is usually about **5 MINUTES**.

3

The **duration** of each contraction **becomes longer** as labor progresses, and the **frequency** of each contraction **gets shorter**.

4

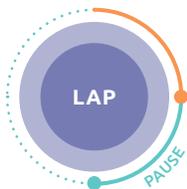
True contractions (as opposed to Braxton-hick contractions) typically start from the topmost and backmost part of the uterus and **spread forwards and downwards** in a wavy pattern producing an **inside-out, cramping** sensation.

HOW TO TIME YOUR LABOR CONTRACTIONS



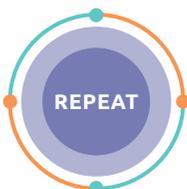
STEP 1 TIME THE CONTRACTION

Start the stopwatch when you feel the initial pain around the top of your abdomen. (This time runs as the pain wraps around your abdomen and progressively fades until it stops).



STEP 2 TIME THE PAUSE

Once the pain has completely stopped, you should **lap the stopwatch** to measure the time period between the end of that contraction and the start of another one.



STEP 3 REPEAT STEPS 1-2

Repeat with each new contraction. Write down / record the frequency of contractions* and the duration of each contraction.**

*The frequency of contractions is the period between the start of a contraction and the start of another contraction.

**The duration of each contraction is the period between the start of a contraction and the end of that contraction.

STEP 4 THE 511 RULE

You're doing great, keep timing! You now need to **look out for a regular contraction pattern** – this is a pattern of contractions that has remained stable over a period of time. If you're unsure, **follow the 511 rule***** when a contraction lasts 1 minute, occurs 5 minutes apart, and has been recurrent for at least 1 hour, that usually indicates it's time to go to the hospital.

***The 511 rule is not a must. Over the course of labor, contractions are expected to be progressive in order to achieve full cervical dilation. If the intensity of your contractions does not increase after several hours, seek medical advice, as this is a sign of non-progressive labor.

If there is anything that doesn't feel quite right during the labor process, always seek medical advice.

5 MINUTE INTERVAL

1 MINUTE DURATION

1 HOUR PERIOD



STEP 5 TIME TO GO!

Once your contractions are regular, it's time to grab your hospital bag and ask whoever is driving you to carefully help you into the car and head to the hospital!