



## **36 WEEKS**

4 weeks and counting. So close you can almost feel it. But too close if you are behind schedule in getting the baby's room ready and births supplies ready. Here are just a few reminders to help you organize your last few weeks.

**FETAL MOVEMENT** Your baby should still be as active as it has been in the past. But the type of movements will have changed. It no longer has any room to make those big punching and kicking movements. Now you will be feeling more like the baby is trying to reposition and stretch those cramped legs and arms. These still count as movements when you are doing your fetal activity checks. You might even be feeling hiccups. Your baby is getting settled in the position it will be in for birth. At your weekly visits we will be making sure that the baby's head is down rather than in a breech position. Babies still move in labor.

**CONTRACTIONS** Your uterine contractions may start to change in frequency, duration, intensity and location. This is normal. You might also notice that they may be pretty regular for a few hours, then stop. This is to be expected. These contractions start to soften your cervix and thin it out for labor (effacement). You might feel them more in your lower pelvis and your lower back. Some describe them to be "strong menstrual cramps." This is what you have been waiting for. In early labor - rest. Don't watch the clock. Walk when you feel up to it. But this is the time to conserve your energy. Rest in a side lying position. Use lots of pillows (under your tummy, between your legs, behind your back). If this becomes too uncomfortable-climb into the shower or tub. Warm water is very relaxing for tight sore muscles. Most importantly **DO NOT GET DEHYDRATED**. Your body is using increased amounts of fluids during labor. It is very easy to become dehydrated. A dehydrated uterus will contract more frequently and less effectively. Eat lightly if you are hungry.

**BLEEDING-** You may notice some "bloody show" (mucous mixed with some blood). This is normal. As the cervix dilates some blood vessels may be broken. You do not need to call unless it is associated with contractions. Bloody show usually indicates the baby will arrive within the next 24-48 hours.

**MUCOUS PLUG-** You may or may not notice losing your mucous plug. This large clump of mucous gets a whole lot of publicity and it really means nothing. Most literature tells you that it means labor will soon start. It will, probably within two or three weeks. Don't confuse your mucous plug with your bag of water.

**CAR SEAT-** Make sure you have it. Make sure you know how to secure it in your car. Make sure you never leave home without it. It's a law.

**BREAST-FEEDING-** If you are planning to breast-feed, now is a good time to make sure that your nipples are not inverted or flat. If they are, you will need to start pulling them out. There are a few products available to help you do this. Please ask for information.

### **WHEN TO CALL**

**Rupture of Membranes:** Call us any time you suspect that your bag of water has broken, even if it is in the middle of the night. There will be no doubt in your mind if the waters break. You will feel a gush. Ruptured membranes (broken waters) will continue to leak.

**Decreased or no fetal movement:** If after doing a fetal activity count, the baby still is not moving it's normal amount, call. Do not wait. Do not ask your friends. Just call. Many times the baby is taking a nap. We can give you suggestions on how to stimulate the baby.

**Bleeding:** Any amount resembling a period requires immediate assessment. Drops on your panties, blood tinged mucous noticed after wiping, bloody show, are all normal. If you are unsure, call.

**Contractions: If this is your first labor please call us when-**

- The contractions are 4-5 minutes apart, lasting 60 seconds
- When you can no longer walk or talk during them

**If this is not your first labor please call us when-**

- The contractions are 5-7 minutes apart, lasting 60 seconds
- When you can no longer walk or talk during them