



Stages of Labor Chart and Timeline

Stage	First Stage	Second Stage	Third Stage
What is it?	Early labor, active labor	Pushing and delivery	Delivering the placenta
When does it start?	Early labor: when contractions are every 5 to 15 minutes, lasting around 60 to 90 seconds. Active labor: contractions become longer and closer together, and when you are 6 centimeters dilated.	Stronger, more intense contractions and when you're 10 centimeters dilated.	After your baby is delivered and your placenta has reached your vaginal opening.
How long (first delivery)	Early labor: 6 to 12 or 20+ hours Active labor: 4 to 8 hours	Up to 2 or 3 hours	Up to 30 minute
How long (second+ delivery)	Early labor: Up to 14 hours Active labor: 4 to 8 hours	Up to 2 or 3 hours	Up to 30 minutes
What happens?	Early labor: count contractions and manage pain. Active labor: head to the hospital or birth center and wait for your cervix to dilate from 6 to 10 centimeters.	You'll bear down and push during your contractions, as instructed by your healthcare provider.	You'll experience light contractions to detach the placenta, then push when instructed to deliver the placenta.
What you can do	Breathing and relaxation exercises, walking, showering or bathing, listening to music, changing positions often, and sipping clear liquids but peeing often.	Breathing, epidural block, or pain medication (if desired), concentrating on your labor partner or healthcare provider.	Breathing and relaxation exercises.
Labor partner help	Massages, counting and helping with contractions, distracting with games or conversation, and applying cold and warm compresses.	Support the birthing position, hold a hand, help with contractions, and offer encouraging, supportive words.	Helping with any lingering contractions, massaging your partner's shoulder, wiping their brow, and offering supportive words.