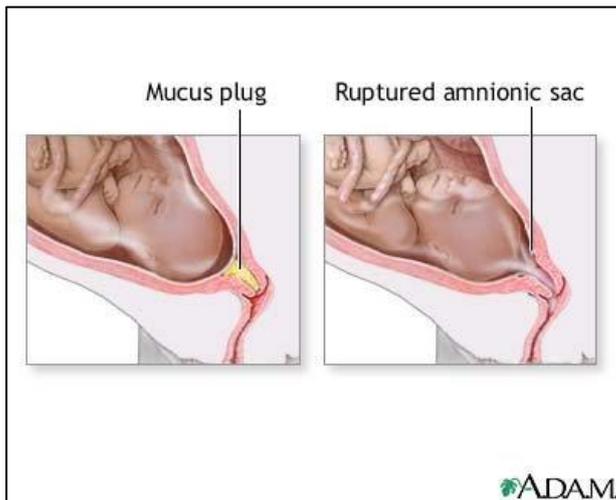
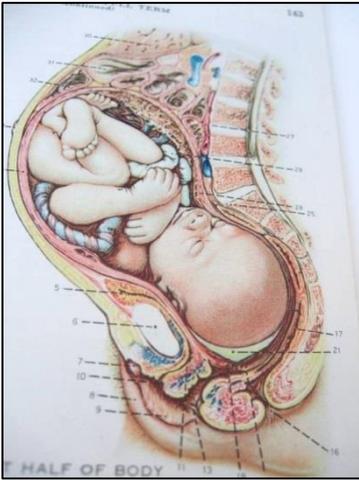


WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU GO INTO LABOUR

Full term is defined from 37 weeks to 42 weeks of pregnancy.

When you go into labour, your baby is usually positioned head down with their back on your right or left side, or towards your abdomen. Any contractions or pains before 37, or you think your waters have broken, you must contact your midwives immediately.



The mucous plug is a barrier which blocks the opening of your cervix to prevent bacteria entering the uterus. It is also called a 'show' the colour of the plug can be white or clear; pink or brown tinged and usually comes away prior to going into labour as your cervix begins to soften and thin, preparing you for labour.

The bag of 'waters' (membranes) surrounding your baby may break. This can happen with or without contractions and the colour of the water should be clear, as shown in the illustration.

If the colour of the water is **BROWN** or **GREEN** or **NOT** clear, it means that the baby has opened his/her bowels and we need to monitor your baby more closely.

When labour commences, initially, the contractions can start very irregularly and last only 15-20 seconds. You may experience some backache or 'period' type pains. In the early stages it is important for you to rest or sleep and eat and drink as you would normally. Labour uses up a lot of energy and it is important to keep your body fed and hydrated with fluids.

As your labour establishes, you will find that your contractions will become more frequent and last longer.

When should I phone you in labour?

- We ask you to phone us when your contractions are every 3-4 minutes and they are lasting at least 60 seconds.
- If you think your waters have broken.
- If you have any concerns about your baby's movements.
- If you would like advice.

We are always available to you if you are uncertain and would like advice.