

# Welcome to the end of your pregnancy!

You are now 36 weeks pregnant. You could begin labor any day. We understand that now, as you are getting so close, you may have more questions and anxiety. Every move, tightening, and discharge brings excitement that THIS COULD BE THE DAY! Here is a list of our most common end of pregnancy questions. Hopefully this helps ease your nerves.

1. The mucus plug-- Your cervix, the mouth of the uterus, is usually closed prior to labor. To help seal it and prevent bacteria or infection from getting to your kid, your body creates a concentration of mucus that plugs the cervix. As you get closer to labor, that plug comes out. You may lose it so slowly and subtly that you don't notice. You may see an increase in your normal vaginal discharge. You may have the whole thing fall out at once in a great bloody, snotty clump. Don't save it. Don't bring it to us in Tupperware. Don't call at 2 am to tell us all about it. Don't call your mom, who lives three states away, and tell her to get in the car and come. It only means that someday you will not be pregnant. You could begin laboring that day but will probably still be pregnant two weeks later. Make note that it has happened, smile at that proof that the end is nearing, and get on with your day. Someday soon, labor will start. I promise.

2. Increase in vaginal discharge—Is my water broken? It can be hard to tell the difference between leaking urine, increased discharge common at the end, and your water breaking. Empty your bladder completely. Then put on dry clothes and a pad. Walk around and bend over. Do some squats. If your water has broken, it just keeps leaking. You will soak the pad pretty quickly. If the pad is dry an hour from now, it was your bladder. Anytime you are not sure or suspect that your water has broken you can go to labor and delivery to have it checked out.

3. My pelvic bone is going to break!

Rest when you can. Get help with household chores from your partner, family and friends. Wear flat, supportive shoes. Sit down to get dressed -- for example, don't stand on one leg when putting on jeans. Keep your knees together when getting in and out of the car -- a plastic bag on the seat can help you swivel. Sleep in a comfortable position -- for example, on your side with a pillow between your legs. Try different ways of turning over in bed -- for example, turning over with your knees together and squeezing your buttocks.

Avoid: standing on one leg, bending and twisting to lift, carrying a baby on one hip, crossing your legs, sitting on the floor, sitting twisted, sitting or standing for long periods, lifting heavy weights, vacuuming, pushing heavy objects, carrying anything in only one hand (try using a small backpack)

4. Am I in labor? Well, this is the big question! The best answer I can give you is this. Labor is progressive. It gets more and more intense and closer and closer together. If you are at least 36 weeks pregnant, we won't stop this but we can't push you in the right direction either. If you are group B-strep negative, which means you don't need antibiotics before you deliver, you can do the majority of your labor at home! Active labor is when you are having the tightening every five minutes, lasting at least a minute, and intense enough that you can't walk, talk, or laugh during the contractions. You should go to labor and delivery when you believe you are in active labor and need pain medication, believe that the baby is coming right now, have fluid leaking, bright red bleeding like a period, if the baby isn't moving normally, or if you start to feel like something is wrong. You can do the irregular contractions and "just feel weird" thing for days before delivery. Eat as you desire. Drink more than you think you need, mostly water but occasionally a sports drink for the sugar and electrolytes. Get a bath or shower for comfort. Keep moving. Movement promotes labor progress. Consider the Miles Circuit. <http://www.milescircuit.com/> to keep the baby moving down and in the best position for birth!

5. Swelling is not a sign of danger. It is a sign that it is hot, you live in Georgia, you are pregnant, and need to drink more water.

6. Bleeding at term is not at all uncommon, especially after intercourse or if you have recently had a vaginal exam. Of course, it could be an early sign of labor! Yippee! It is not a reason to go to labor and delivery unless it is running down your leg.