

Johns Hopkins School of Medicine Definition of “Labor”

- Labor is a series of continuous, progressive contractions of the uterus that help the cervix dilate (open) and efface (thin). This allows the fetus to move through the birth canal.
- Labor usually starts two weeks before or after the estimated date of delivery. However, the exact trigger for the onset of labor is unknown.
- While the signs of labor may vary, the most common are contractions, rupture of the amniotic sac (“breaking your water”) and bloody show.
- Labor is typically divided into three stages: dilation and effacement of the cervix, pushing and the delivery of the placenta.
- Pain management options during labor include nonmedicated measures, analgesics and anesthesia.

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/labor>