

## **True vs. false labor**

### **Am I really in labor?**

Labor begins with uterine contractions and the opening of the cervix. The uterus tightens and relaxes at regular intervals, causing the abdomen to feel hard, then soft. These contractions make the cervix thin out (efface) and open as wide as possible (dilate). On average, labor lasts 12-20 hours. Second and subsequent labors are much faster.

### **False Labor: (Braxton-Hicks)**

These contractions often are irregular and do not become closer together. They may stop when you walk, rest, or change position. Often felt low in the abdomen, these contractions are usually weak and do not become stronger in intensity. Braxton-Hicks contractions can be painful but do not signal the start of true labor. They can occur as early as 22 weeks of pregnancy.

### **True Labor:**

True labor contractions are regular contractions that occur closer together as time goes on and continue despite movement or rest. They increase in strength and severity with time. Contractions are usually felt in the lower back and radiate to the front of your abdomen.