

# 37 Weeks

## answers to your pregnancy questions

### Packing for the hospital

It is a good idea to pack a small bag to take with you to the hospital in case labor begins a few weeks in advance. Pack things in advance and leave the bag in a convenient spot so that you don't have to throw things in a bag at the last minute. Make a list of items that you want to take with you but are unable to pack ahead of time, and keep it in a place that will trigger your memory to take these items with you.

Don't panic if you forget items. If a friend or relative is unable to bring you something you need, the hospital may have these items. Your partner or coach may also want to have a similar bag packed in advance to make their stay more comfortable.

### Lightening and show

During the latter part of pregnancy, changes take place as your body begins to prepare for labor. These changes may occur anywhere from a few weeks to a few hours before labor begins.

The baby's head settles deeper into the pelvis. This is often referred to as the "baby dropping" or lightening. The top of the uterus (or fundus) is positioned high in your abdomen, just underneath your breasts, until this occurs. Once lightening occurs the fundus will often drop 2 to 3 inches away from your ribs. This may make it now easier to breathe but you may also feel more pressure in your pelvis and on your bladder, causing you to make more frequent trips to the bathroom.

It is not unusual to never notice the "baby dropping" or lightening. This is not an indication that everything is not progressing normally, so don't be discouraged if this has not yet happened for you.

During pregnancy, a thick mucus plug accumulates at the cervix. When the cervix begins to dilate the plug is pushed into the vagina. When this happens you will notice increased vaginal discharge which may be clear, pink or even slightly bloody. This may occur several days or longer before actual labor begins. As with lightening, this increased discharge may not occur for every mother-to-be. If at any time you notice leakage of clear, watery fluid in either a trickle or a gush call your doctor or if after hours, go to labor and delivery to be evaluated.

37  
WEEKS

### at 37 weeks of pregnancy:

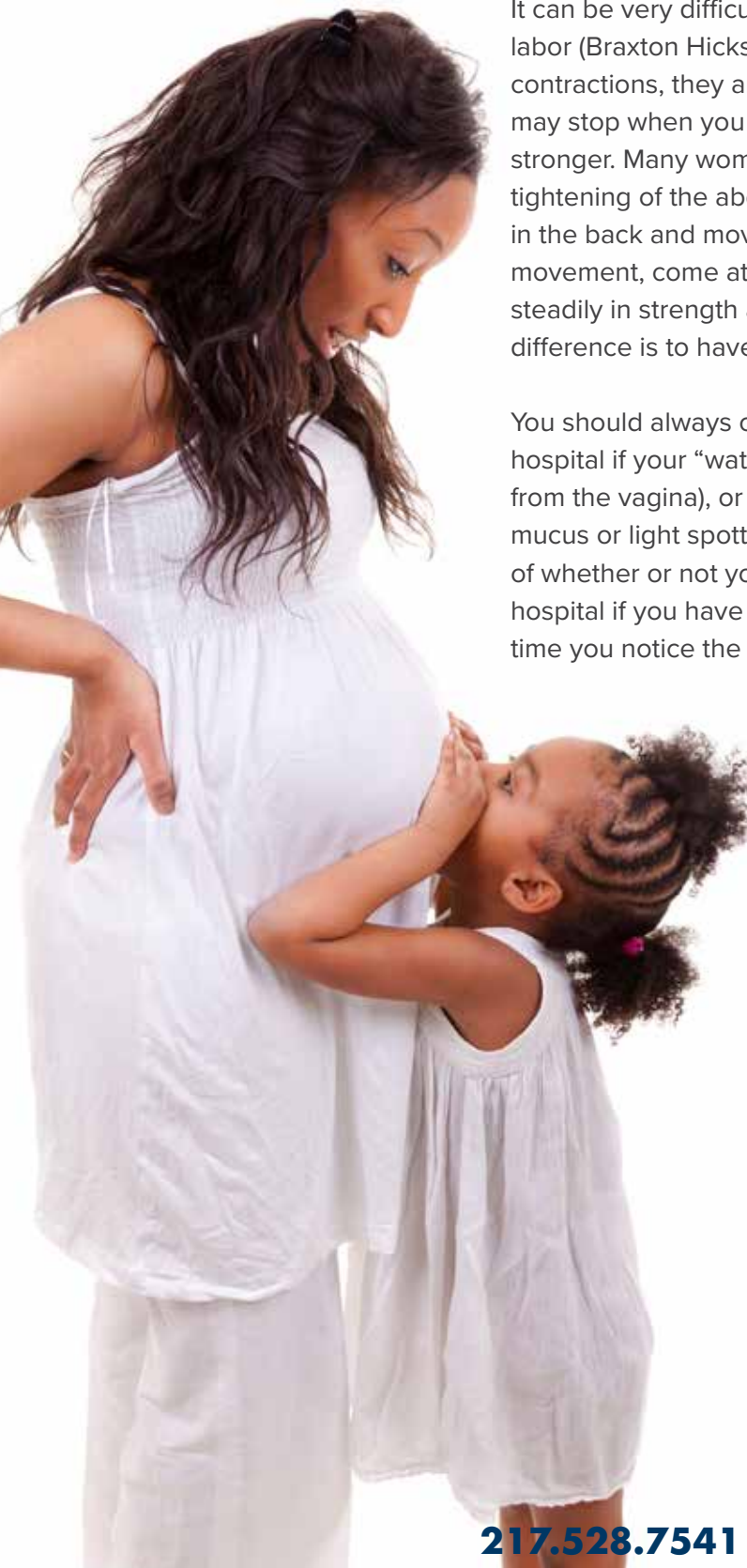
The body hair that has covered your baby to keep them warm throughout your pregnancy (lanugo) has been mostly shed. Your baby's body fat has now increased to about 16% and your baby will continue to add fat over the elbows, knees and shoulders.

Reminder: If a culture for Group B strep was performed at your last visit, your physician will discuss these results with you at your 37 week visit and let you know if you will require antibiotics during your labor. If you have an allergy to penicillin, be sure to mention this during your visit.

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## Labor precautions

It can be very difficult to tell the difference between true labor and “false” labor (Braxton Hicks contractions). When a you experience Braxton Hicks contractions, they are often irregular and do not get closer together. They may stop when you walk, rest or change position and they do not usually get stronger. Many women only feel Braxton Hicks contractions in the front as a tightening of the abdomen. During true labor, the contractions usually start in the back and move to the front. True contractions will continue despite movement, come at regular intervals, get closer together and increase steadily in strength as time goes on. Sometimes the only way to tell the difference is to have a vaginal exam to find out if your cervix has changed.

You should always call your doctor or go to the labor and delivery unit of the hospital if your “water breaks” (clear, odorless, watery fluid gushes or trickles from the vagina), or you have bright red vaginal bleeding (other than bloody mucus or light spotting following a vaginal exam or intercourse) regardless of whether or not you are having contractions. Call your doctor or go to the hospital if you have severe pain with no relief between contractions or any time you notice the baby is moving less often.

## Preeclampsia

Preeclampsia is a condition that occurs only during pregnancy. Symptoms of preeclampsia include headaches, vision problems, upper abdominal pain and rapid weight gain of more than 2 pounds per week. Your doctor would detect preeclampsia based on elevated blood pressure above a certain point and high levels of protein in your urine.

This condition causes stress on the kidneys and can also affect the liver, the brain and the placenta. Women with preeclampsia must be closely monitored with frequent visits and tests to monitor the health of both you and your baby. Sometimes hospitalization is necessary, and depending on the severity of the condition and the gestational age of the baby, a decision may be made about whether to deliver the baby.

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