FOR YOUR FINAL WEEKS

Signs of Labor

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Somewhere in the last weeks of pregnancy, your body starts sending signals that labor is getting closer. Some are quiet and easy to overlook, others are hard to miss. Here is both, so you know what to expect and can feel steady when it happens.

Soft signs your body warming up

These can show up days, even weeks, before labor begins. They don't mean it's time to go, only that things are moving in the right direction.

- **Cramping and low back discomfort.** A persistent, menstrual-like ache, sometimes paired with lower back pressure.
- **Restlessness or big feelings.** Trouble settling, more tears or irritability than usual.
- **A softening cervix.** Something your provider may note at a check. A sign, not a schedule.
- **A burst of nesting energy.** A sudden urge to clean or organize. Lovely, but pace yourself.
- **Baby settles lower.** Often called "dropping." Breathing may feel easier, though there's more pressure down low.
- **Losing the mucus plug.** A golf ball size amount of jelly like discharge which is clear, pink, red or brown, all at once or bit by bit.
- **Mild nausea or looser stools.** Your body clearing the way, often mistaken for a stomach bug.

> *A cervix check is a snapshot, not a prediction. Some people stay softened and slightly dilated for weeks before anything starts, others go from nothing to active labor in a few hours. Your body keeps its own timeline.*

Hard signs labor is likely underway

These are harder to miss. When you notice any of these, it's time to call your care team.

- **Contractions turn real.** Strong, regular, and getting closer together, and they don't ease with rest, water, or a change of position.
- **Bright red bleeding with strong contractions.** More than the light spotting you may have had before.
- **Your water breaks.** A gush or a slow trickle, either way.

This list is educational and isn't complete or a substitute for medical advice. If anything feels wrong, trust that instinct and call your care provider, whether or not it matches something listed here.