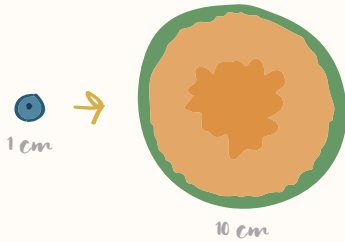


# THE STAGES OF labor

## STAGE 1 "ripening" of the cervix

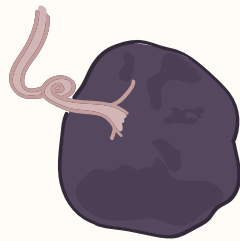
The beginning of the transition from pregnancy to labor! Hormones called prostaglandins begin to soften and thin the cervix. Contractions in the upper part of the uterus pull it wider. Your cervix has a journey of its own to fulfill; it will go from firm and closed to 10 cm open. That's roughly the circumference of a rockmelon!



### when will my water break?

It depends! Sometimes the bag of water breaks before labor, sometimes during labor, and rarely, baby is born still inside!

Having the bag of water broken is a common form of intervention with risks and benefits every birthing person should be made aware of and consider.



## STAGE 3 here comes placenta

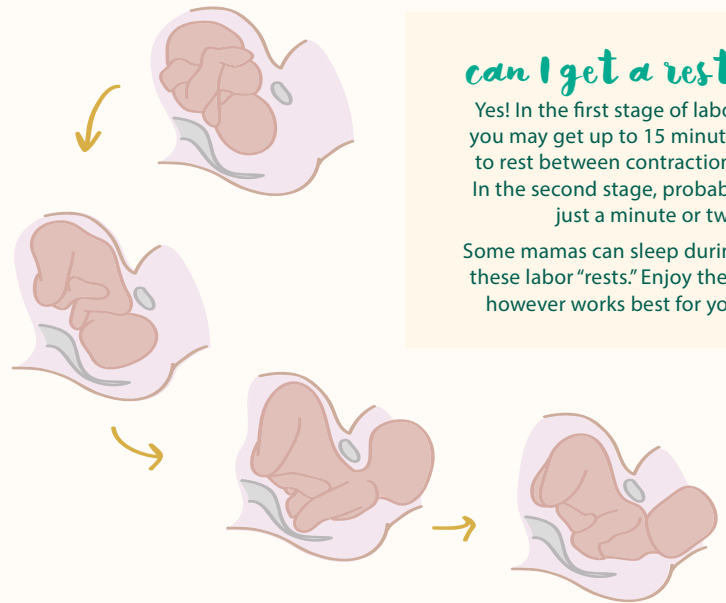
Baby is born, and your contractions — they're still happening. Why? Your uterus is contracting to pull the placenta from its lining and push it down, out through the birth canal. This can happen by itself, or involve varying amounts of assistance from your caregiver. Typically, the placenta is delivered 10 minutes to an hour after baby is born.

### what do I do with my placenta?

You may choose to have the placenta remain attached to baby until it naturally falls away; you may dispose of the placenta, or you may keep it for encapsulation or to digest in another manner. It's all up to you!

## STAGE 2 pushing out baby

Contractions continue. Now they push your baby from the uterus, through the birth canal. It's a snug fit to say the least. But did you know your pelvis and baby's head are both made of bones held together with flexible ligaments? They are! This allows them to move and mold as baby lowers, twists, and turns, getting closer to birth with every contraction and push!



### can I get a rest?

Yes! In the first stage of labor you may get up to 15 minutes to rest between contractions. In the second stage, probably just a minute or two.

Some mamas can sleep during these labor "rests." Enjoy them however works best for you!

## STAGE 4 postpartum

Postpartum is defined as the first six weeks after baby's born. Your body basically just completed an olympic event, and needs some readjusting. There will be aching, bleeding, and discomfort, and most new parents still wear maternity clothes six weeks after baby, so don't stress about your figure. Whatever you feel, harbor no shame. Most new parents report feeling low at this time, and some trouble eating and sleeping. Communicate with your doula or caregiver to determine the best way to care for yourself, and your newest loved one!



Information in this infographic comes from:  
Cervical dilation: What is it and why should I care? ([www.kidspot.com.au](http://www.kidspot.com.au)); Third Stage of Labor ([www.nct.org.uk](http://www.nct.org.uk))  
Your Postdelivery Body: What's Going On And Why ([www.thebump.com](http://www.thebump.com)); How To Tell The Difference Between Baby Blues And Depression ([www.thebump.com](http://www.thebump.com)); Ina May's Guide to Childbirth, by Ina May Gaskin