

Timing Contractions

There are two factors to consider when timing contractions. How far apart are the contractions, and how long are the contractions?

To determine how far apart the contractions are you begin timing at the start of a contraction, and end timing at the beginning of the next contraction.

To determine how long a contraction is, you begin timing at the beginning of a contraction, and end at the end of the same contraction.

Here is an example to help you understand:

Contraction Begins	Contraction Ends
3:30:15	3:31:15
3:32:15	3:32:15
3:34:15	3:35:15
3:36:15	3:37:15

In this example, the contractions are two minutes apart, since it takes two minutes from the start of one contraction until the start of the next contraction. The contractions are a minute long because it takes one minute from the start to the end of the contraction.

Your contraction pattern may not be that exact. That is ok. Remember your body is responding to the rise of hormone levels, not the clock. When you want to time your contractions, mark the beginning and ending times for about five contractions and then get an average.

Here is an example for you:

Contraction Begins	Contraction Ends
3:30:15	3:31:00
3:35:00	3:35:45
3:40:10	3:40:55
3:45:05	3:45:55

In this example, averaging out the times, it seems that these contractions are pretty close to five minutes apart, and last around 45 seconds.

One last point about contraction timing. You don't need to track every contraction of your labour. When you feel something has changed (contractions seem to be coming stronger or faster, or the mother seems to be working much harder) then average out about 5 contractions to see if there is any change in your contraction pattern. Timing every contraction is a waste of your energy for information that has very little use.