

## OBSTETRICAL VISIT 37 TO 40 WEEKS

### HOW IS MY BABY DEVELOPING?

- 38 weeks – the baby is 34 centimeters long on average and weighs about 2900 grams (6 pounds 6 ounces) on average. The baby's body is plump with fat. The lanugo hair has almost disappeared. Toenails reach the toe tips
- 40 weeks – the baby is 36 centimeters long on average and weighs 3400 grams (7 pounds 8 ounces) on average although there is a wide variation. The babies fingernails extend beyond the fingers and the testes are in the scrotum are palpable in the inguinal canal

### WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF LABOR AND WHEN SHOULD I GO TO THE HOSPITAL?

- You should go to the hospital if you have any of the following
  - Regular contractions every 5 minutes for 1 hour
  - The water has broken
  - Vaginal bleeding more than a little spotting after your cervix is checked or you have intercourse
  - If your baby is not moving normally

### WHAT IS LABOR?

- Labor occurs when your body starts to have regular painful contractions that cause your cervix to dilate. There are several stages of labor.
  - Latent Labor – Dilation from 1 to 3 centimeters. During this stage of labor your body gets ready. Contractions occur and may be regular or irregular. Contractions may or may not be painful. At this time the body is preparing for active labor but may take breaks in the preparation.
  - Active Labor – Dilation 4 centimeters to 10 centimeters – During this stage of labor contractions are regular and painful and the body does not stop the contractions until the baby is delivered.
  - Delivery Of The Baby - After the mother dilates to 10 centimeters she can begin pushing. First time mothers may sit up for a while to allow gravity to help the baby move down the birth canal. Pushing may last up to 2 to 3 hours for first time mothers but may only be a few minutes for women who have had babies before.
  - Delivery Of The Placenta – The placenta is delivered a few minutes after the baby delivers.

### YOU SHOULD CONTINUE YOUR KICK COUNTS!!!!

- After a meal you can lay on your side and feel the baby moving
- It is normal to feel 10 movements within 2 hours
- If you do not feel enough movement you should be seen in the hospital or office immediately.

### WHAT CAN I DO TO MAKE THE BABY COME FASTER?

- Walking – Although it is questionable whether this helps in studies most moms swear by it. However if you walk, make sure you drink plenty of water to prevent dehydration and false-labor.
- Have Intercourse – semen has chemicals called prostaglandins that act to help the cervix prepare for labor.
- Stripping the membranes – the water bag can be separated a little from the uterus when the cervix is checked. This causes release of prostaglandins that help the cervix prepare and thin

down. After the membranes are stripped a woman is about 1/3 more likely to go into natural labor within 1 week of having it done. I can strip your membranes starting about 1 week prior to the due date so let me know if you want this done.

#### WHAT SHOULD I USE FOR PAIN DURING THE DELIVERY?

- There are several options including IV pain medications and the epidural
- The epidural is the most common form of pain medication and is the only form of pain control that you can have during the birth of the baby. The epidural is a dose of pain medicine placed in the back by highly trained anesthesia providers. After the epidural is placed you will feel pressure with the delivery but will not feel the same intensity of pain. The epidural has no effect on the baby and may cause some soreness in the back the first week after delivery but is not associated with chronic back pain. An epidural does NOT increase your risk of having a cesarean section, however it can prolong your labor.
- IV pain medications may be used while you are dilating and take the edge off of the pain. However, the degree of pain control is usually not as good as with the epidural. IV pain medicine is used while a woman is dilating but they are not used while the mother is pushing for birth. This is because some of the IV pain medication goes to the baby and makes the baby sleepy. It is important for the baby to be awake and alert for delivery so that it can take deep breaths soon after the birth and clear out its lungs. Also alert babies can breastfeed better.
- Some women don't desire any medication during labor. That is perfectly fine but I recommend that you take a class or get some instructions in preparation to delivery. You can look into Lamaze classes/techniques and the Bradley method.

#### HOW LONG TILL MY INDUCTION/DELIVERY?

- Pregnancies that are high risk due to high blood pressure and diabetes will be induced 1 to 3 weeks before the due date.
- Scheduled repeat C-sections are performed 1 week prior to the due date
- Low risk pregnancies are induced 1 week after the due date if you do not go into labor before. I wait until 1 week after the due date in an attempt to give your cervix time to prepare. Early induction of women whose body is not ready results in at least a 50% chance of C-section. However, starting at 1 week after the due date there are risks to the baby. Therefore, if you are low risk and everything else is normal we can wait until 1 week after the due date for induction.

#### WHAT SHOULD I BRING WITH ME TO THE HOSPITAL?

- Consider bringing a change of clothes for you, your partner, and your baby to go home with, baby outfits for pictures, car seat, camera and video recorder, slippers, nursing bras, toiletries, snacks, magazines/books/laptop, and health insurance card.

#### COMMON PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

- Round ligament pain
  - These are usually sharp pains that occur on both sides of the lower abdomen.
  - They can be relieved by taking Tylenol extra strength 2 pills (1000 mg) every 6 hours by mouth as needed.
- Lower Back Pain – is usually caused by muscle strain due to carrying the baby and can be treated with 2 pills of extra strength Tylenol every 6 hours and applying a heating pad to the lower back about 3-4 times per day for 20 minutes at a time. Upper back pain can be caused by a bladder infection so please let me know if you have these symptoms.