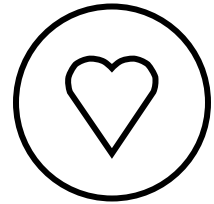
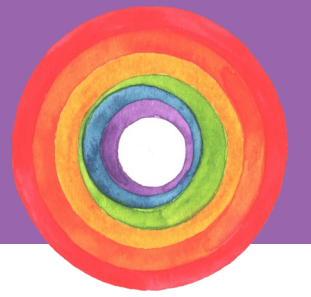
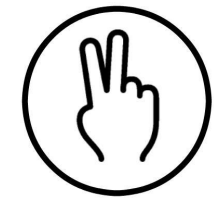


Guide to Cervical Dilation



The cervix must soften (efface) and open (dilate) around baby's head at the beginning of the birth canal. You cannot see this opening.

Distraction is best in early labor. Enjoy it. The longer and harder you obsess over your labor, the longer and harder it will be.



Openness is determined in centimeters by the caregiver's fingers and is subjective. There is no reason you need to know this number.

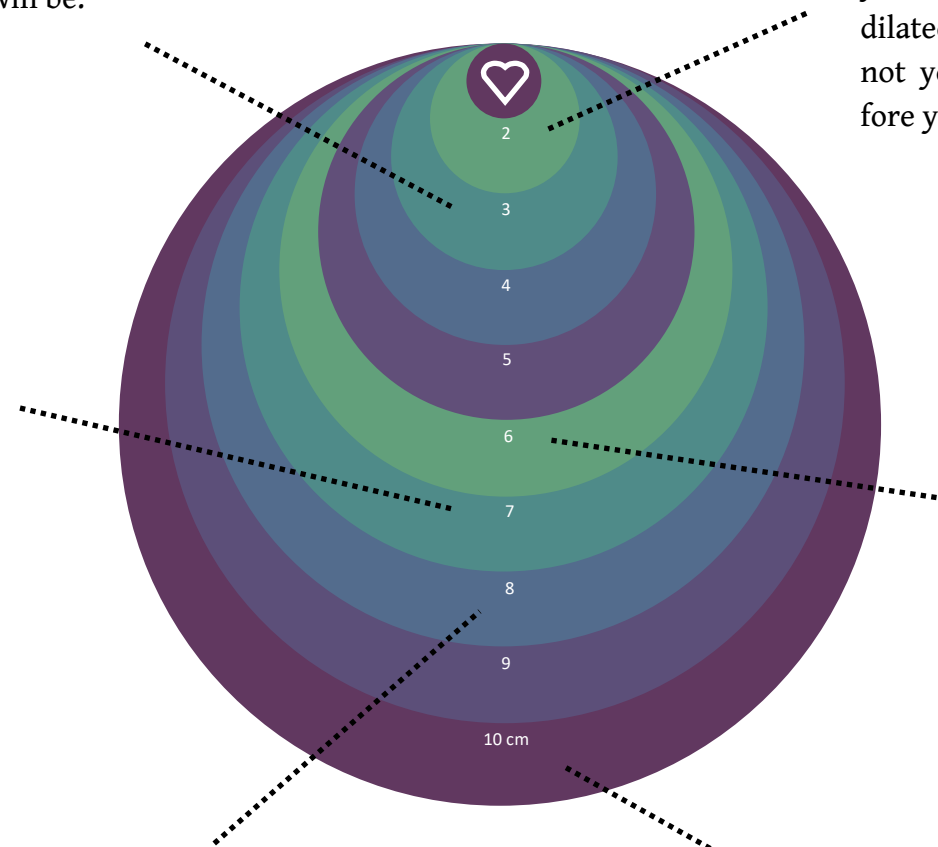
Keep upright and moving if you can. Find your rhythm and use imagery to help yourself relax. Partners: protect the space.



Sphincter Law: Your cervix will not open in the presence of stress or adrenaline. Birth where you feel safest.

At 8cm you are possibly feeling transition, the intense stage of labor that ends in complete dilation. You're almost there. Let go; your body wants to open like the petals of a flower.

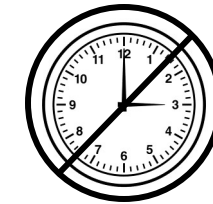
Note: Vaginal exams may be uncomfortable and/or have a detrimental effect on your emotional state. Frequent exams are not beneficial.



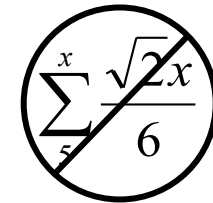
You may begin dilating long before you begin labor. Measuring dilation in pregnancy does not impact when you will go into labor. You may be dilated 1-2cm (or many more if it's not your first baby) for weeks before your labor begins.

6cm is clinically considered active labor. This is good progress! You are learning why labor is called labor. It's a good time for the tub or shower.

You did it! Your cervix is fully dilated. This does not mean your uterus is ready to push, merely that the door is now open.



It's not a clock. It could take a long time to get to 5 and minutes to get to 10. How you feel and the position of baby can affect speed of dilation.



Do not perform labor math. (See above.) Let your baby do all the work; thinking too much activates your neocortex and hampers your hormones.



Though very fancy, your cervix is not a crystal ball. It will never tell you how soon your baby will be born.