

# INFORMATION SHEET

## Going into labour

# expert care for women

### How do I know if I am in labour?

You will start experiencing contractions which last for 30 to 60 seconds and occur every ten minutes or less. The contractions do not ease when you lie down and it becomes difficult to talk through the contractions.

### What is pre-labour?

When your body begins to show signs of labour it is known as pre-labour or false labour. You may pre-labour for several hours, days or weeks before true labour begins. Pre-labour may stop completely or gradually increase to become true labour.

Some signs of pre-labour include:

- contractions that are irregular and sometimes painful;
- contractions that may be hardly noticeable, while others may make you stop what you are doing;
- contractions that can be felt in your abdomen, groin or lower back;
- contractions that tend to slow down when you lie down and rest;
- contractions may occur every two to three minutes and at other times be 10 to 15 minutes apart, and
- a mucous discharge that can be clear, pink, red or brown in colour. The discharge is from the mucous plug that has sealed your cervix. This discharge is known as a 'show'.

### When should I go to the Hospital?

It is best to develop a plan for when you should go to hospital with your doctor during your pregnancy. It is generally recommended that you phone the hospital or your doctor before you go to the Hospital so your stage of labour can be assessed.

There are some factors which may require urgent attention including:

- if you are less than 37 weeks pregnant and your membranes have ruptured, you experience vaginal bleeding or have contractions, and

- if you are more than 38 weeks pregnant and you have bright coloured bleeding.

### What can I do to ease the discomfort of pre-labour?

There are a few simple steps you can take to help ease the discomfort of pre-labour. Some of these steps include:

- eating and drinking as normal. If you feel nauseous eat small meals frequently and drink water or diluted fruit juice;
- continuing with your normal activities. If you are pre-labouring during the day take a gentle walk or swim, but do not tire yourself;
- trying to rest well at night. If you are not allergic to paracetamol try taking two before you go to bed;
- having a warm bath, or
- using a heat pack on your back or abdomen.