True vs. False Labor

True labor refers to the phase of labor where the fetus is being actively delivered, as opposed to false labor, which can involve contractions, but no significant cervical changes occur. The expulsion of cervical mucous known as the bloody show typically signals true labor, though sometimes occurs in false labor. There are several factors involved in true labor, such as progressive effacement and dilation of the cervix, regular contractions, and engagement of the presenting part. The outcome of true labor is birth of the fetus. False labor is typified by irregular contractions, a soft non-effaced cervix, and no engagement of the presenting part of the fetus.



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Bloody Show
Blood-drop Show
When true labor occurs, the cervix becomes softened and dilated and effacement occurs; this process is evident by a bloody show, which is the expulsion of cervical mucus that is pinkish in color. This typically occurs during true labor, however can sometimes occur in false labor if early cervical changes have occurred.

True Labor

Regular, Strong Contractions
Regular-intervals of Strong Contracting-muscle
Regular contractions will last for a longer period of time and occur closer together. In addition, strong contractions will occur with increased intensity when walking. Contractions are typically felt in the lower back and radiate to the lower abdomen. Regular, strong contractions occur as a result of increased levels of estrogen and prostaglandins and a decrease in progesterone.

Progressive Effacement and Dilation
Progressive e-face and Dyed-dilation
Effacement refers to the thinning and shortening of the cervix. Dilation results in the widening of the cervix. In true labor, effacement and dilation will occur in order to allow for the fetus to pass through the birth canal.

Engagement of Presenting Part
Engagement-ring of Newborn
Engagement of the presenting part refers to the head of the fetus passing and engaging with the pelvis inlet. Generally, this occurs before the onset of active labor.

False Labor

Irregular Contractions
Irregular-intervals of Contracting-muscle
In false labor, contractions occur at irregular intervals and often stop when the pregnant woman changes position or walks. Irregular contractions are felt in the abdomen above the umbilicus or in the back.

Cervix Soft
Soft-and-squishy Cervix-certificate
In false labor, the cervix may be soft, but there is no apparent dilation or effacement.

No Engagement of Presenting Part
No-more Engagement-ring
When false labor occurs, the fetus does not engage with the pelvic inlet to prepare for active labor.

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