

WORST-CASE SCENARIO®

HOW TO DELIVER A BABY IN A TAXICAB

Before you attempt to deliver a baby, use your best efforts to get to a hospital first. There really is no way to know exactly when the baby is ready to emerge, so even if you think you may not have time to get to the hospital, you probably do. Even the “water breaking” is not a sure sign that birth will happen immediately. The water is actually the amniotic fluid and the membrane that the baby floats in; birth can occur many hours after the mother’s water breaks. However, if you leave too late or get stuck in crosstown traffic and you must deliver the baby on your own, here are the basic concepts.

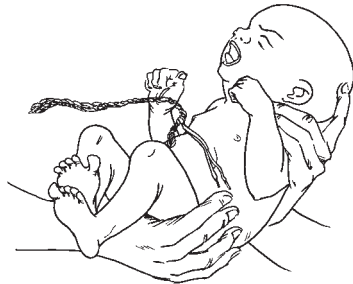
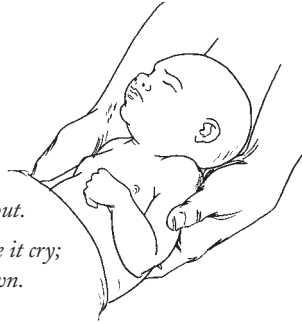
1 Time the uterine contractions.

For first-time mothers, when contractions are about three to five minutes apart and last forty to ninety seconds—and increase in strength and frequency—for at least an hour, the labor is most likely real and not false (though it can be). Babies basically deliver themselves, and they will not come out of the womb until they are ready. Have clean, dry towels, a clean shirt, or something similar on hand.

As the baby moves through the birth canal, guide it out by supporting the head.



Support the body as it moves out. Do not slap its behind to make it cry; the baby will breathe on its own.



After you have dried off the baby, tie the umbilical cord with a shoelace or a piece of string several inches from the body.

Leave the cord alone until the baby gets to the hospital.

- 2** As the baby moves out of the womb, its head—the biggest part of its body—will open the cervix so the rest of it can pass through.

(If feet are coming out first, see next page.) As the baby moves through the birth canal and out of the mother's body, guide it out by supporting the head and then the body.

- 3** When the baby is out of the mother, dry it off and keep it warm.

Do not slap its behind to make it cry; the baby will breathe on its own. If necessary, clear any fluid out of the baby's mouth with your fingers.

- 4** Tie off the umbilical cord.

Take a piece of string—a shoelace works well—and tie off the cord several inches from the baby.

- 5** It is not necessary to cut the umbilical cord, unless you are hours away from the hospital.

In that event, you can safely cut the cord by tying it in another place a few inches closer to the mother and cutting it between the knots. Leave the cord alone until you get to a hospital. The piece of the cord attached to the baby will fall off by itself. The placenta will follow the baby in as few as three or as many as thirty minutes.

IF THE FEET COME FIRST

The most common complication during pregnancy is a breech baby, or one that is positioned so the feet, and not the head, will come out of the uterus first. Since the head is the largest part of the baby, the danger is that, if the feet come out first, the cervix may not be dilated enough to get the head out afterward. Today, most breech babies are delivered through cesarean sections, a surgical procedure that you will not be able to perform. If you have absolutely no alternatives (no hospital or doctors or midwives are available) when the baby begins to emerge, you can try to deliver the baby feet first. A breech birth does not necessarily mean that the head won't be able to get through the cervix; there is simply a higher possibility that this will occur. Deliver the baby as you would in the manner prescribed above.

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