

When should I leave for the maternity and what should I bring?

Your third trimester of pregnancy has finally begun and your delivery date is fast approaching. What do you **need to bring to the maternity** and how do you know when it is **time to leave**?

As of the 36th week of pregnancy, your baby could be born at any time. Remember to pack your **bag and have your maternity dossier ready**. In general, your maternity will provide a list of what you will need for yourself and for your newborn. Besides personal hygiene products, find out what your hospital does and does not accept, to avoid carrying unnecessary weight. You should also prepare your maternity dossier, which includes your Carte Vitale, supplementary insurance card and birth plan.

Three **distinct signs may indicate that labor has begun**, letting you know it's time to leave for the maternity: the loss of the mucus plug, the onset of contractions and the rupture of the membranes (when your water breaks)¹.

The **mucus plug** is a collection of secretions whose purpose is to isolate the uterus during pregnancy, thereby protecting the fetus from infection. The plug is a translucent, gelatinous mass that may be greenish or brownish in color. Its loss can be confirmed several days prior to – or the same day as – the birth.

Unlike Braxton-Hicks contractions, which occur occasionally throughout the pregnancy, **early labor contractions** are regular and provoke cervical dilation. These contractions gradually increase in intensity and duration: when labor starts, they occur every 15 to 20 minutes and last 15 to 20 seconds, and gradually build to every two to three minutes, lasting 30 to 45 seconds, when the baby is close to coming out².

The **membranes may rupture** at any time during labor. When this occurs, you should always consult your doctor, whether or not you are having contractions. You will feel a trickle of a clear, watery substance, of variable quantity, caused by the rupture of the membranes surrounding your baby³. If your contractions intensify, this is a sign that your labor has begun. Gather your things and get on your way to the maternity!

¹ <https://www.ameli.fr/assure/sante/themes/accouchement-nouveau-ne/accouchement>

² http://campus.cerimes.fr/maieutique/UE-obstetrique/travail_debut/site/html/cours.pdf

³ <http://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/bs1971937>