

The Stages of Labour

Nursing

Four stages, what defines each, and the observations that belong to it.

Definitions vary a little between texts; the sequence does not.

1

First · latent

Irregular contractions; the cervix softens, shortens and begins to open.

2

First · active

Regular strong contractions; progressive cervical dilatation.

3

Second stage

Full dilatation to the birth of the baby; expulsive effort.

4

Third stage

Birth of the placenta and membranes; blood loss estimated.

5

Fourth · first hours

Uterine tone, blood loss, vital signs, bladder, first feed.

Educational reference. Midwifery care is a specialist scope of practice. Local maternity pathways and the named midwife govern all decisions.