

# Birth and its stages

## First Stage

First stage could be divided into three phases. Latent phase, when the opening of the cervix widens up to 3cm, can last for days with irregular contractions but also may pass unnoticed. This stage will be prolonged if the baby isn't in the best position. Leaning forward in 3 trimester and use of some shiatsu points help the baby to get in the right position before the labour. During active phase the cervix dilation increases to 10cm. It can last from 1 hour to even 36 hours. The stronger contractions last at least 40 seconds every 3-4 minutes. During transition phase the body is preparing for the second stage of the labour. The contractions may be every 2 minutes lasting up to 1 minute. The mother might feel more emotional, nauseous, hot and then cold or empty her bowels. It will last just a few minutes or a while, up to an hour or more. With these effects the labour is moving on and should be taken as a good sign. If the mother accepts them, she'll find it much easier to cope. Breathing, visualisation, massage and right positions will help her to relax and keep focused. Fear and anxiety, exhaustion, lack of food or lying on the back will slow down or even block the progress resulting in more pain. If the mother feels sleepy, she should do so to help her gain more energy for the potentially more physically demanding second stage.

## Second Stage

The length varies from one woman to another. Some babies are born within one or two contractions, while others take their time. It is important to be patient and push when the desire to push is overwhelming. Also when the baby's head finally appears it's important not to suddenly push hard as it can overstretch mother's perineum and increases a chance of tearing. The mother needs to stay relaxed. Even tension in her neck and shoulders from a lot of pushing (meaning all focus is on upper body) might slow the labour down. Laying down on the back results in more painful work. It's harder to push uphill but also the pelvis is compressed and the bones can't move easily (the baby might get stuck). As during the previous stage, breathing, massage, visualisation and right positions are very helpful.

## Third Stage

This stage isn't so intense as the placenta is delivered, which is much smaller than the baby. One contraction usually delivers it 10 - 60 minutes after baby's birth. Exhaustion, full bladder or not upright position can delay placenta delivery. Breastfeeding stimulates release of oxytocin, the hormone helping the uterus to contract and deliver the placenta.