

Giving birth

Childbirth consists in three stages: the dilation of the cervix, the birth of the child and the delivery of the placenta.

It generally takes anywhere from four to eight hours for the **cervix to dilate**, depending on whether or not it's your first pregnancy¹. The amount of time necessary also varies from one woman to the next. Throughout this phase, your **contractions** will become increasingly **frequent, intense and painful**, causing your cervix to gradually expand to allow the baby to come out.

After your arrival at the maternity, your healthcare provider will check how far your cervix has dilated. If you are far along, you will be taken to a labor room and prepped for the delivery. Your baby's state of health will also be monitored using sensors which are placed on your belly to record the baby's heartbeat. At this time, you may receive an **epidural anesthesia to relieve the pain caused by contractions**.

Once your cervix has fully dilated (10 cm)², you will feel a strong desire to bear down, or push, once the baby has begun to descend into the birth canal. You are now entering the **second stage of labor**, which lasts around thirty minutes and ends with the birth of your baby. Your healthcare provider will make sure your baby's head is visible (known as "crowning") and will ask you to push. The emergence of the baby's head is the most difficult part of childbirth. Sometimes a controlled incision of the perineum under local anesthesia (episiotomy)³ is necessary to avoid tearing. Next, your baby will turn in order to position his or her shoulders in your pelvis and, thanks to the pushing effect of your contractions, the rest of the body will easily glide out. After the birth, your caregiver will place your newborn on your tummy before cutting the umbilical cord and providing immediate care.

One **last step** awaits you in the half-hour following the birth of your child: the **delivery** of the placenta. During this stage, the contractions continue, helping you to push out the placenta. It is very important that the entire placenta be delivered, to avoid the risk of hemorrhage².

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

² <http://campus.cerimes.fr/gynecologie-et-obstetrique/enseignement/item22/site/html/cours.pdf>

³ <http://campus.cerimes.fr/maieutique/UE-obstetrique/episiotomie/site/html/cours.pdf>