

Contact Details

You can speak to a midwife at any time by phoning Central Delivery Suite on:

01553 613720

If the morphine we give you makes you too drowsy or affects your breathing, call an ambulance by dialling **999**

If you feel your labour is progressing, or you have any concerns then call CDS on the above number and speak to a midwife.

Oral morphine

Patient information on using oral morphine as pain relief in the Latent Phase of Labour

What is the latent phase of labour?

The latent phase of labour is the time when changes in your body start occurring in preparation for established labour. The latent phase varies widely in its effects and duration. It may not be continuous - sometimes the latent phase will stop and restart hours later. This is entirely normal and is your body's way of preparing itself for labour in small stages.

What happens during the latent phase of labour?

In the latent phase of labour, your womb begins to contract irregularly as it starts to co-ordinate the action of its muscle fibres and slowly adjusts its shape so that the cervix moves into the right position for birth. As time goes on, the contractions act upon your cervix, causing it to soften, thin, become stretchy and start to open. The latent phase lasts until your cervix is opened to 4cm and you are having painful regular contractions.

What might I experience during the latent phase?

Some women find the pain of contractions in the latent phase mild. Others are distressed by the pain and painkillers are needed.

You may see a 'show' (blood stained mucus).

Your 'waters' may break.

You may feel increased pelvic pressure due to the descent of the baby into the pelvis.

How long does the latent phase last?

The latent phase can range from 6 hours to two-three days. It tends to be longer in your first pregnancy.

What can help during the latent phase of labour?

- A calm, tranquil environment
- A warm bath
- Distraction (listening to music, watching TV)
- TENS machine
- Eating high carbohydrate snacks to maintain your energy levels
- Drinking plenty of fluids
- Emptying your bladder regularly.
- Continuing your normal routine.
- If it is night-time, try to rest and get some sleep.
- Otherwise try to remain upright and mobile.

When should I contact the delivery suite?

The best place for you in the latent phase of labour is at home in your familiar surroundings, supported by people you trust. Feel free to contact central delivery suite at any time if you are concerned about any of the symptoms you are experiencing.

If, when you are examined on admission to delivery suite, you are found to be in the latent phase of labour and you require pain relief, we can offer you oral morphine.

Oral morphine can be given in the latent phase of labour if pain relief is needed.

It is a liquid medicine and the dose we give is 10mg (one 5ml spoonful).

Oral morphine is an opioid drug and has some side effects similar to those of pethidine.

Side effects affecting you:

- drowsiness (less than with pethidine)
- nausea and vomiting (not common)

Side effects affecting your baby:

- drowsiness
- short-term respiratory depression (this is rare and can be counteracted with another drug if needed)
- possible delays in establishing breast feeding

This dose of morphine will not cause problems when you breastfeed your baby

We will not give you oral morphine if you are –

- known to be intolerant to morphine
- suffering from severe nausea and vomiting
- suffering from severe pre-eclampsia
- a poorly controlled diabetic
- in Pre-term labour
- known to have any problems with your baby e.g. growth concerns

How we will help you in the latent phase

After being given the first dose of oral morphine we will encourage you to be mobile in the clinical area.

We will check your pulse, blood pressure and respiratory rate.

We will assess your level of comfort after 30 minutes.

If the oral morphine has helped you can be discharged home.

In addition to the morphine we can give you 2 tablets of Paracetamol.

If these do not ease the pain we can give you a second dose of morphine.

If you have a second dose of morphine we will monitor you for 1hour.

If you are more comfortable after this you can be discharged home.