



ALTERNATIVE WAYS TO ASSESS PROGRESS OF LABOUR WITHOUT A V.E

The Association for Improvements in the Maternity Services (AIMS) suggests various alternatives to vaginal examinations, as a way of estimating how labour is progressing (4).

These include:

- 1) Listening and watching - midwives have likely cared for many people in labour and are generally able to judge labour progress by a birthing person's behaviour.
- 2) The purple line - in some birthing people a purple line appears starting from the anus, and tends to lengthen between the buttocks at the same rate as cervical dilation (i.e. 1cm line = 1cm cervical dilation). However, this method doesn't always work, some birthing people do not have a line, and some lines are unrelated to cervical dilation.
- 3) Leg temperature - as labour progresses and blood is diverted to the uterus, it pulls blood away from the extremities, making the legs progressively colder. It's thought that when the mid-calf is cold that the birthing person is about 5cm dilated. This technique doesn't work as well for birthing people who've had epidurals or are in warm water.

Regardless of whether or not you choose to have vaginal examinations, or request health care providers use other techniques of estimating the progress of your labour, it should always be a choice that you make, using information and what personally feels right to you. You do not have to justify or explain your reasoning to anyone else.

1. <https://www.nhs.uk/.../the-stages-of-labour-and-birth/>
2. <https://www.nice.org.uk/.../intrapartum-care-for-healthy...>
3. <https://www.hra.nhs.uk/.../measuring-progress-in-labour.../>
4. <https://www.aims.org.uk/.../vaginal-examinations-in-labour>

Quote from Midwife based in The Lake District - Jane Tomlinson Wightman
Not having VE's is the only way to birth undisturbed!

Remember Vaginal examinations are not underpinned by research or guidelines. They are only culturally based and hospital policy based on partograms. You are not obliged to consent to a VE if you are not comfortable with one. Listen to this fantastic podcast.

<https://thamidwivescauldron.buzzsprout.com/1178486/12666613>