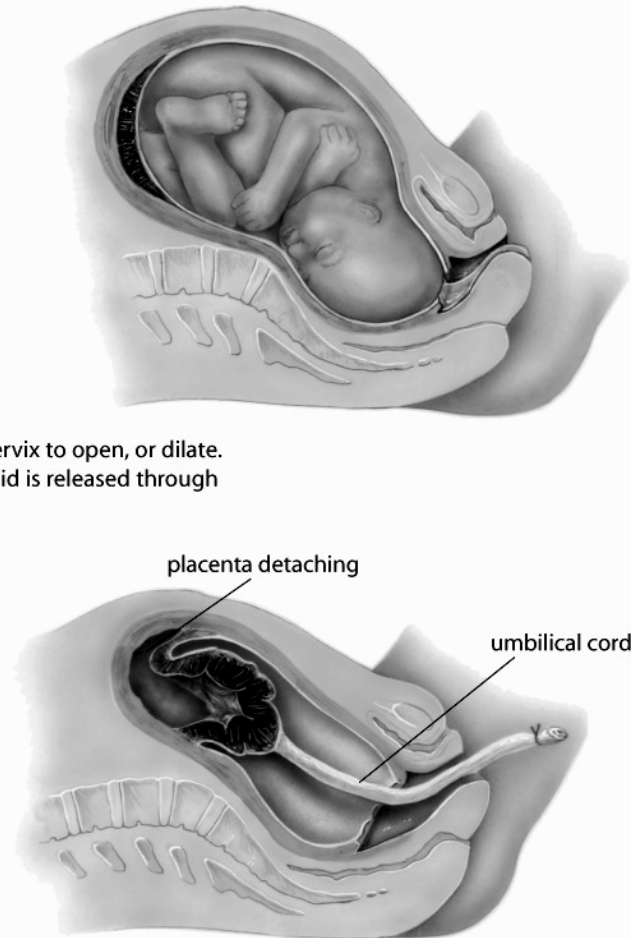


- A Dilation stage** Uterine contractions and oxytocin cause the cervix to open, or dilate. During this stage, the amniotic sac breaks and the amniotic fluid is released through the vagina. The dilation stage usually lasts from 2 to 20 hours.



- B Expulsion stage** Forceful contractions push the baby through the cervix to the birth canal. As the baby moves through the canal, the head rotates, making it easier for the body to pass through the birth canal. This stage usually lasts from 0.5 to 2 hours.



- C Placental stage** About 10 to 15 minutes after the baby is born, the placenta and umbilical cord are expelled from the uterus. The expelled placenta is called the afterbirth.

Three stages of parturition.