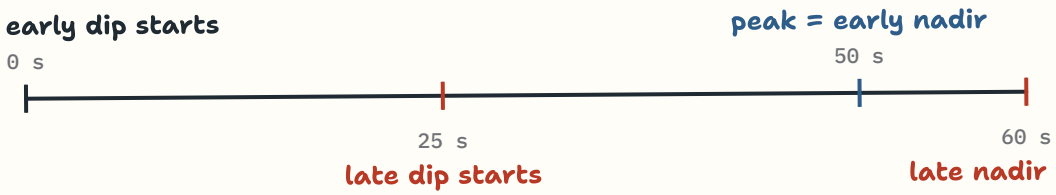
Decelerations in 2 questions

Early, variable or late, then category I, II or III



Step by step

1. How fast: 30 s or more gradual, under 30 s abrupt.
2. Where is the nadir against the contraction peak?
3. Category: I normal, III abnormal, II everything between.
4. Recurrent lates: left side, fluids, stop oxytocin, deliver if no improvement.

	Early	Variable	Late
Fall	Gradual (30 s or more)	Abrupt (under 30 s)	Gradual (30 s or more)
Nadir	At the peak	Changes each time	After the peak
Cause	Head compression	Cord compression	Uteroplacental insufficiency
Action	None, benign	Reposition; amnioinfusion if recurrent	Act if recurrent

Early vs variable vs late

Nadir against the peak

At the peak = early (benign)

Abrupt and changing = variable (cord)

After the peak = late (placenta)

Exam traps

- Early and late are both gradual: the nadir position separates them.
- Amnioinfusion is for recurrent variable decelerations, not late ones.
- Recurrent means half or more of contractions.
- Absent variability with recurrent lates is category III, not II.

Fetal heart rate decelerations: early, variable and late

Video, written lesson, practice question and sources: medservatory.com/usmle-step-2-ck/ob-gyn/fetal-heart-rate-decelerations-early-variable-late

For exam study only, not medical advice. Follow local guidelines and your lab's ranges.
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