
Preterm Labor

REDUCE YOUR RISK & LEARN THE SIGNS

Preterm labor is when a woman goes into labor before completing 37 weeks of pregnancy. Immediate medical attention is required when the signs of preterm labor are seen so attempts can be made to stop it. If preterm labor isn't stopped, the baby will be born prematurely. This can be a very serious situation, especially if the birth is very early and the baby's birth weight is very low.

■ SIGNS OF PRETERM LABOR

Call your healthcare provider right away if you experience any of the following signs before 37 complete weeks of pregnancy:

- Abdominal cramps (with or without diarrhea)
- Contractions (occurring 4 or more times/hour and may be painless)
- Pelvic or lower abdominal pressure
- Low, dull backache
- Change in vaginal discharge
- Vaginal bleeding
- Gush or trickle of fluid from your vagina

■ HOW TO REDUCE YOUR RISK OF PRETERM LABOR

We don't know the cause of nearly half of all cases of preterm labor, but research studies suggest that there are certain medical and lifestyle factors that put women at higher risk. Be proactive in reducing your own risk of preterm labor by trying the following tips.

Risk-Reduction Tips

- Get early and regular prenatal care
- Call your healthcare provider if you feel burning during urination
- Brush and floss your teeth every day and get dental checkups
- Manage chronic health conditions like diabetes and high blood pressure carefully
- Call your healthcare provider if something doesn't feel right
- Quit dangerous habits, such as smoking, drinking alcohol, and taking illegal drugs
- Gain the recommended amount of weight for your pregnancy
- Don't take medications or supplements without approval from your healthcare provider
- Reduce the stress in your life
- Leave an abusive relationship
- Find support through family, friends, and community resources
- Reduce long hours at work, especially doing physical labor on your feet

