

Talk to Your Doctor Today

The following health conditions and events in the mother may contribute to pre-term labor. Ask your health care professional more about the following conditions that can affect your pregnancy:

- Pre-eclampsia (high blood pressure)
- Kidney or heart disease
- Diabetes
- Infection
- Lack of prenatal care
- Poor nutrition
- Young age (a mother age younger than 18)
- Substance abuse
- Previous pre-term birth
- Multiple birth (twins or more)



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Articles in this newsletter are not a substitute for the care and advice of medical professionals. When you have a question or need medical advice, diagnosis or treatment, consult your physician.

This newsletter is produced by Inova Health System in conjunction with your faith community. If you prefer not to receive this newsletter, please notify the appropriate personnel in your faith community.

Inova Health System is a not-for-profit health care system based in Northern Virginia that consists of hospitals and other health services including emergency and urgent care centers, home care, nursing homes, mental health, blood donor services, and wellness classes. Governed by a voluntary board of community members, Inova's mission is to improve the health of the diverse community we serve through excellence in patient care, education and research.

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For Your Health

Premature Birth

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1 in 8 babies in America is born prematurely. Pre-term birth can happen to any pregnant woman even if she does everything she can to have a healthy pregnancy. In nearly half of the premature births the cause is unknown. However, talking with your care provider about your individual risks, having good health before and during your pregnancy, and getting regular prenatal care are all steps you can take to help have a healthy baby.



Congregational Health Partnership is a program of Inova HealthSource, Community Health Division

Pre-term labor is when labor begins before 37 weeks of pregnancy.

Nearly 12 percent of all babies are born too soon and too small.



Warning Signs

You should ask your health care provider what to do if you should have any of the warning signs listed below. It is important to know what to do and where to get help.

Do this for your baby!

SIGNS OF PRE-TERM LABOR

- * Contractions (your stomach tightens like a fist) every 10 minutes or more often
- * Change in vaginal discharge (leaking fluid or bleeding from your vagina)
- * Pressure that feels like your baby is pushing down
- * Low, dull backache
- * Cramps that feel like your period
- * Abdominal cramps with or without diarrhea

Online Resources:

www.marchofdimes.com
www.carepages.com
www.CafeMom.com
www.keepkidshealthy.com/newborn/premature_babies.html
www.americanbaby.com
www.premature-infant.com

To arrange for a tour of your Inova hospital or take an Inova HealthSource childbirth class, call 703-204-3366 or go to www.inova.org.



The Word of Faith:

Faith traditions value children as Divine gifts to be protected and nurtured.

Reduce Your Risk

If you're thinking about having a baby, it is important to plan ahead. Get prenatal care early.

The following is important for both you and your partner:

- * Know your family history.
- * If you smoke, take drugs or drink alcohol, get help to stop.
- * Take a daily prenatal vitamin that includes 400 micrograms (0.4 mg) of folic acid to help reduce the risk of birth defects.
- * Start healthy habits: Eat nutritious foods, exercise regularly, maintain a proper weight and don't smoke or drink alcohol.
- * Reduce stress by resting/relaxing.
- * If you do not feel safe in your home, let your health care provider know.
- * If you feel burning or pain when you urinate, you may have an infection. Call your health care provider.

What Do I Do?

If you are experiencing any of the signs of pre-term labor:

1. Call your health care provider for advice and say, "I am worried I am in pre-term labor."
2. If you are bleeding or leaking fluid from the vagina, or if signs get worse, go directly to the hospital.
3. If it feels like an emergency, call 911.
4. Stop what you're doing.
5. Rest on your left side for one hour.
6. Drink 2 to 3 glasses of water or juice. Do not drink coffee or soda.

