

What Is Preterm Labour?

Preterm labour is when your labour starts more than three weeks before your due date (before 37 weeks gestation).

What Causes Preterm Labour?

Preterm labour can occur in any pregnancy, so it is important for everyone to know preterm labour can happen. We do not know all the reasons for preterm labour, but some of the things that increase the risk are:

- tobacco, alcohol and drug use
- vaginal and urine infections
- twin and multiple pregnancies
- if you had a preterm birth before
- injury in your pregnancy (including family violence)

What Does Preterm Birth Mean For My Baby?

Babies born more than three weeks early may:

- have problems breathing, feeding, and keeping warm
- get infections more easily
- have to stay in the hospital longer
- need special equipment to help them (breathing machine, feeding tube)
- have long term problems such as seeing, learning, walking, or breathing
- be too small and weak to live

How Can I Tell If I Am In Preterm Labour?

You may be in preterm labour if you have:

- regular contractions of the uterus
- menstrual like cramps or low, dull backache
- pain or cramps in your abdomen
- water (not urine), mucous, or blood coming from your vagina
- pressure in the vagina or a feeling that the baby is “pushing down”
- an unusual need to pass urine urgently or often

What Should I Do If I Think I Am In Preterm Labour?

- lie down on your left side and rest for one hour
- drink two or three glasses of water or juice
- if the symptoms go away after one hour you can get up, but take it easy
- tell the clinic doctor about your symptoms at your next clinic visit

When Should I Go To The Hospital?

Call the Richmond Hospital Birth Centre 604-244-5134 and go to the hospital right away if:

- symptoms get worse during the one hour rest
- water (not urine) is leaking from your vagina
- you have bloody show or bleeding

Where can I get more information?

One online resource is HealthLinkBC

www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthtopics/content.asp?hwid=hw222237