

Preventing Preterm Birth

Birth before 37 weeks of pregnancy is considered 'preterm'.



photo credit courtesy of Rebecca Thomas

In Canada, about 1 in 12 live births are preterm. It is important to be informed.

Your health plan should include healthy weight gain, safe exercise and good nutrition. It is important to keep all scheduled appointments with your doctor or care provider.

If you fall into one of these risk categories, it is important to speak to your doctor or a care provider so your health can be monitored and a care plan created.

You were born preterm

Discuss with a care provider.

Are experiencing vaginal bleeding during pregnancy

Contact a care provider.

Have high blood pressure, diabetes, or kidney disease

You may be prescribed Aspirin (after 12 weeks pregnancy). Do not self medicate.

Are over-weight or under-weight before pregnancy

Your health plan should include healthy weight gain, safe exercise and good nutrition.

Had a pregnancy less than 12 months ago

Spacing pregnancies can reduce the risk.

Are pregnant with multiples (two or more)

Progesterone may be prescribed if the length of your cervix shortens.

Had surgery to remove part of your cervix

Contact a care provider.

Use drugs, cigarettes, alcohol

Seek resources and options for support and control.

Have high levels of stress or depression

Seek mental health resources, support, and counselling.

Have a pre-existing medical condition

Contact a care provider or specialist if you are planning another pregnancy.

Have a bladder or kidney infection during pregnancy

You may be prescribed antibiotics.



If you have had a previous preterm birth

please refer to page 2 (reverse)

This information is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Always consult a physician or other medical care provider.



Visit us online for more information on Preterm Birth, plus other useful resources and programs focused on premature babies and their families.

CPBF  Canadian Premature Babies Foundation

canadianpreemies.org

Pregnancy after a previous preterm birth

Your risk for another preterm birth is higher if you have had a preterm birth. Here is what you need to know.



photo credit: courtesy of Rebecca Thomas

It is important that your health is being monitored by your doctor or care provider to decrease the risk of another preterm birth. Some common causes of early birth include:

Early contractions

You may be screened by transvaginal ultrasound to monitor the length of your cervix during pregnancy.

Progesterone may be prescribed if the length of your cervix shortens.

Seek immediate medical help if you have early contractions to help identify them

- even if you think the contractions are Braxton Hicks - and not preterm labor contractions.

Preeclampsia (high blood pressure in last half of pregnancy)

You may be prescribed Aspirin (after 12 weeks pregnancy). Do not self medicate.

High levels of stress, anxiety or depression

Talk to a doctor about mental health resources, and counselling.

Preterm premature rupture of membranes (PPROM)

You may be screened for bacterial vaginosis.

You may be screened by ultrasound to monitor the length of your cervix during pregnancy.

Progesterone may be prescribed if the length of your cervix shortens.

Drugs/alcohol, cigarette use

Ask for resources and options for support and control.

Pre-existing medical condition

Important: If you are planning another pregnancy, talk to your doctor or any specialists involved in your medical care.

It is important to keep your regular appointments with your care provider during pregnancy.

Important terms:

Braxton Hicks: Irregular 'false labour' contractions which may be uncomfortable

Preeclampsia: High blood pressure during the last half of pregnancy that can affect different organs

Preterm premature rupture of membranes (PPROM): The amniotic sac around the baby breaks before 37 weeks of pregnancy, causing leakage of amniotic fluid from the vagina

Bacterial Vaginosis: A condition involving the excess growth of a type of bacteria in the vagina

Progesterone medication: A hormone given to reduce risk of early birth in some women

This information is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Always consult a physician or other medical care provider.

Questions? These are best handled by a doctor or care provider. For general information about pregnancy please visit the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists Canada information page: pregnancyinfo.ca

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