

Labor before 37 weeks is called pre-term labor. Babies born early can have short term and/or long term problems. If they are born extremely early the baby may not survive. It is important to recognize signs of pre-term labor to protect yourself and your baby.

## **What are the signs of pre-term labor?**

**Contractions-** occurring 10-15 minutes apart or closer. A contraction feels like tightening of the belly. You may or may not experience pain during these contractions.

**Low, Dull Backache-** You might feel backache below your waistline. It may come or go or it may be constant.

**Pressure-** The baby feels heavy or as if it is pushing down low in your pelvis. The pressure doesn't go away when you rest.

**Leaking or Gushing Fluid** - If your water breaks, you might feel a continuous light or heavy flow of fluid from your vagina.

**Menstrual-like Cramps** - You may feel cramps low or near your pelvic bone like you feel with your periods. They may come or go or be constant.

**Changes in Discharge** - You may notice a watery, mucousy or bloody (pink or brownish) discharge from your vagina.

**Overexertion, sexual activity or dehydration** can cause symptoms of pre-term labor, but generally do not actually cause pre-term birth. The following steps will help you prevent symptoms that may mimic pre-term labor:

1. Drink at least 8 glasses of non-caffeinated fluids per day.
2. Eat small, frequent and nutritious meals.
3. Discuss work and activity (including sexual activity) restrictions with your health care provider.

## When do I need to call my health care provider?

Call Triage at 734-764-8134 if you have any of the following signs and symptoms:

- Uterine contractions or cramping occurring 4-6 times per hour and continuing after rest and drinking fluids.
- Leaking watery, bloody or foul-smelling fluid from your vagina.
- Increased pelvic pressure or backache that is not relieved with rest.
- Temperature over 100.4F.
- Decreased fetal movement - if you have less than 5 movements per hour during a time the baby is usually active.

Keep/schedule next OB health care provider  
appointment\_\_\_\_\_

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Author: Joanne Bailey CNM PhD,  
Reviewers: Barbara Getty CNM MS, Patricia Crane RNC MS

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