

Preterm Labor Warning Signs

Premature, or preterm, birth is any delivery that takes place before the 37th week of pregnancy. You may be relieved to know that more babies are born late than early.

You can help prevent preterm labor with proper nutrition and not smoking, drinking alcohol or using drugs during your pregnancy, and following your healthcare team's instructions carefully. Keep in mind that the best way to prevent preterm delivery is to detect preterm labor early. As always, when in doubt contact your healthcare team or Labor and Delivery at your hospital. Be sure to notify your healthcare team if you experience:

- A change in vaginal discharge, such as change in color of mucus or a discharge with a fish-like odor
- Sensation that "something feels different," for example, agitation, flu-like symptoms, or sensation that the baby has dropped
- Leaking or gushing clear fluid or bright red bleeding or spotting
- Persistent low, dull backache or low back or pelvic pressure, or
- Four or more uterine contractions per hour

Your healthcare team can also discuss how to identify differences in preterm labor versus false labor, or Braxton-Hicks contractions.