



Preterm Labor

What is it?

Pregnancy most often lasts 40 weeks. Preterm or premature labor is when labor begins prior to 37 weeks. Your body will respond the same way, even though you have had your baby early. When a baby is born prematurely, the baby may not be ready to live outside the womb. The organs may not be fully developed.

A baby who is born early will need extra care in the hospital. It may take a few weeks or longer before the baby is allowed to go home. A good estimate of when they will go home is their due date. The earlier the baby is born, the more problems a baby may have. Premature babies are also more likely to have health problems throughout their life than babies who are not born early.

What are the main signs?

- Cramping in lower belly
- Low, dull back pain
- Pressure in pelvic area
- Watery fluid or bloody vaginal discharge
- Tightening of your belly (contractions) every 10 minutes or more often
- Flu-like symptoms such as upset stomach, throwing up, or loose stools
- Vaginal bleeding or spotting

What problems could happen?

- Infection
- Bleeding
- Blood clots
- Baby is born too soon to live outside the womb

Treatment

Your doctor may order:

- Medicine to stop or slow the contractions
- Medicine to help your baby's lungs develop before birth. These are called steroids. (These steroids are different from the ones athletes take to build muscle). It would be 2 separate shots 24 hours apart.
- Bedrest
- Consult with a NICU doctor

Things you can do to help

- Stay hydrated
- Keep your bladder emptied
- Nothing in the vagina other than medical necessity
- Decrease physical activity

continued on back >>

Magnesium Sulfate for Stopping/ Slowing Contractions

Magnesium sulfate relaxes muscles. Your uterus is a muscle. The goal is to relax your uterus and stop/slow contractions.

Amount of time it will be used will be determined by your physician.

What to expect when you're on Magnesium Sulfate

- Hourly checks by your nurse
- Accurate recording of your intake (drinks) and output (urine)
- Blood pressure cuff and pulse oximeter (finger probe) on at all times
- Bedside toileting
- Continuous fetal monitoring

Symptoms

- Headache
- Blurry vision/visual changes
- Hot/sweating/flushed
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Dry mouth/bad taste in your mouth
- Drowsiness/fatigue/muscle weakness

Information Use and Disclaimer:

This information is not specific medical advice and does not replace information you receive from your health care provider

Source: Lexicomp Online: Patient care-Preterm Labor