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Preterm Labour

What is preterm Labour?

It is labour that starts between 20 and 37 weeks of gestation. It can happen in any pregnancy and can lead to Preterm birth of your baby.

Why is preterm labour a concern?

Preterm babies are at greater risk the earlier they are born. They are more likely to:

1. Have trouble breathing, feeding and keeping warm
2. Could have long-term health problems such as: vision (seeing), learning, walking, and breathing difficulties.
3. They get infections more easily.
4. May be too small and too weak to live.
5. Have longer hospital stays and may have long term health difficulties.

What can increase the risk for Preterm Birth?

Half of all preterm births happen to women with no known risk factors. However, it has been shown that a women's risk of premature labour increases with:

1. Use of tobacco, drugs (including marijuana and opioids) and / or alcohol during pregnancy
2. Previous preterm birth
3. Injury
4. being pregnant with twins or triplets

What can you do to help reduce your risk?

1. Start your prenatal care early. Go to ALL your appointments
2. Stop using drugs, alcohol and tobacco: Alberta Health Services Addiction Help line – 1-866-332-2322; Alberta Quits – tobacco reduction program – 1-866-710-QUIT (7848)
3. Prevent injuries – Wear your seatbelt (shoulder belt should cross the centre of the chest and shoulder. Lap belt under your belly – across your hips). Get Help for family violence. Report injuries to health care provider.
4. Choose a healthy lifestyle: refer to your book – “Pregnancy and Birth – Healthy Parents, Healthy Children” by Alberta Health Services
5. Talk to your health care provider if you have concerns about your lifestyle choices, workplace environment, stress, anxiety, and family violence.

Preterm Labour – Know the Signs

1. **Regular Contractions –more than 6 in an hour**
2. **Abdominal cramps (may feel like menstrual cramps or gas pains), with or without diarrhea.**
3. **Full or heavy feeling in the vagina**
4. **Changes in low back pain**
5. **Bleeding or spotting (lighter bleeding) from the vagina**
6. **Unusual fluid gushing, or leaking from the vagina**

What to DO?

***Contact your doctor at Rockyview Maternity and Family Practice – ph: 403-640-0600
or**

***Go directly to the Rockyview General Hospital (6th floor) – Women’s Specialty Unit**

Do not ignore any signs of preterm labour. Early response to preterm labour reduces the risk of preterm birth.

Source: Pregnancy and Birth– Alberta Health services; online www.healthyparentshealthychildren.ca