

([Kochanek, Murphy, and Xu, 2015](#)). The actual cause of prematurity is not known in most instances. Factors such as poverty, maternal infections, previous preterm delivery, multiple pregnancies, pregnancy-induced hypertension, and placental problems that interrupt the normal course of gestation before completion of fetal development are responsible for a large number of preterm births. Additional factors are listed in [Box 8-3](#).

Box 8-3

Etiology of Preterm Birth

Maternal Factors

Socioeconomic

- Malnutrition
- Age
- Race

Chronic medical conditions

- Heart disease
- Renal disease
- Diabetes
- Hypertension

Behavioral

- Substance abuse
- Smoking
- Poor or absent prenatal care

Factors Related to Pregnancy