




PRETERM BIRTH

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Preterm birth occurs if your baby is born before the 37th week of your pregnancy. The earlier your baby is born, the more severe the complications are.

RISK FACTORS

If you have any of these characteristics or conditions, you have an increased risk for having a preterm birth. That doesn't mean that you necessarily will deliver before your due date. However, you should speak with your doctor about this possibility and work it into your birth plan.

- ◇ Conceived via in vitro fertilization
- ◇ Teenage pregnancy
- ◇ Pregnancy at an older age
- ◇ Infection
- ◇ Prior preterm birth
- ◇ Carrying multiple babies (twins, triplets, etc.)

- ◇ High blood pressure during pregnancy
- ◇ Tobacco use
- ◇ Alcohol use
- ◇ Use of illicit drugs or alcohol
- ◇ High stress
- ◇ Substance abuse
- ◇ Fetal anomalies
- ◇ Anomalies of your uterus

What effects can preterm birth have on your infant?

- ◇ Neurological disorders, such as cerebral palsy (CP)
 - CP is caused by damage to the part of the brain controlling voluntary movement. This disease may not be detected until the child is a few months or years old.
- ◇ Breathing problems
- ◇ Feeding difficulties



- ◇ Developmental delay
- ◇ Vision problems
- ◇ Hearing impairment
- ◇ Death

If you undergo a preterm birth, it can be difficult to support yourself and your baby. You can talk to your family, friends, and doctor about ways they can support you. You can also make an appointment with IHS Psychology.

There is no Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) for pre-term babies at IHS or Coteau in Sisseton. If you have a preterm birth, you should arrange for care in Sioux Falls or Minneapolis. Make sure to speak with your doctor during your prenatal visits if there is a high risk for a preterm birth.

What are the warning signs of preterm birth?

- ◇ Contractions every 10 minutes or less
- ◇ Increase in vaginal fluid, discharge, or blood
- ◇ Pelvic pressure, which feels as if the baby is pushing down
- ◇ Dull, lower back pain

- ◇ Cramps that feel like period cramps
- ◇ Abdominal cramps without diarrhea

What are some ways to prevent preterm births?

- ◇ If you smoke, work on quitting.
- ◇ Avoid alcohol, illegal drugs, and misuse of prescription drugs.
- ◇ Begin prenatal care as early as possible.
- ◇ Keep up with prenatal care appointments.
- ◇ Ask your doctor about taking progesterone medications. If you

have already had preterm babies, this medication may reduce your risk of preterm birth.

- ◇ Don't schedule an elective C-section birth prior to 39 weeks of pregnancy.
- ◇ Seek medical help immediately if you believe that you are experiencing symptoms of pre-term labor. In this case, doctors can give you medications that will slow down your labor and speed up your baby's development.