



Home → Health Topics → Childbirth Problems

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Childbirth Problems

Childbirth [<https://medlineplus.gov/childbirth.html>] is the process of giving birth to a baby. It includes labor and delivery. Usually everything goes well, but problems can happen. They may cause a risk to the mother, baby, or both. Some of the more common childbirth problems include:

- Preterm (premature) labor [<https://medlineplus.gov/pretermabor.html>] , when your labor starts before 37 completed weeks of pregnancy
- **Premature rupture of membranes (PROM)**, when your water breaks too early. If labor does not start soon afterwards, this can raise the risk of infection.
- **Problems with the placenta**, such as the placenta covering the cervix, separating from the uterus before birth, or being attached too firmly to the uterus
- **Labor that does not progress**, meaning that labor is stalled. This can happen when
 - Your contractions weaken
 - Your cervix does not dilate (open) enough or is taking too long to dilate
 - The baby is not in the right position
 - The baby is too big or your pelvis is too small for the baby to move through the birth canal
- **Abnormal heart rate of the baby**. Often, an abnormal heart rate is not a problem. But if the heart rate gets very fast or very slow, it can be a sign that your baby is not getting enough oxygen or that there are other problems.
- **Problems with the umbilical cord**, such as the cord getting caught on the baby's arm, leg, or neck. It's also a problem if cord comes out before the baby does.
- **Problems with the position of the baby**, such as breech, in which the baby is going to come out feet first
- **Shoulder dystocia**, when the baby's head comes out, but the shoulder gets stuck
- **Perinatal asphyxia**, which happens when the baby does not get enough oxygen in the uterus, during labor or delivery, or just after birth
- **Perineal tears**, tearing of your vagina and the surrounding tissues
- **Excessive bleeding**, which can happen when the delivery causes tears to the uterus or if you are not able to deliver the placenta after you give birth to the baby
- **Post-term pregnancy**, when your pregnancy lasts more than 42 weeks

If you have problems in childbirth, your health care provider may need to give you medicines to induce or speed up labor, use tools to help guide the baby out of the birth canal, or deliver the baby by Cesarean section [<https://medlineplus.gov/cesareandelivery.html>] .

NIH: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

Start Here

- What Are Some Common Complications during Labor and Delivery? [<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/labor-delivery/topicinfo/complications>]  (Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development)
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.nichd.nih.gov/salud/temas/labor-delivery/informacion/complicaciones>]

Diagnosis and Tests

- Monitoring Baby's Heart Rate during Labor [<https://familydoctor.org/monitoring-babys-heart-rate-labor/?adfree=true>] (American Academy of Family Physicians)
Also in Spanish [<https://es.familydoctor.org/monitoreo-de-la-frecuencia-cardiaca-del-bebe-durante-el-parto/?adfree=true>]

Treatments and Therapies

- Assisted Vaginal Delivery [<https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/assisted%20vaginal%20delivery>] (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists)
- Episiotomy: When It's Needed, When It's Not [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/labor-and-delivery/in-depth/episiotomy/art-20047282?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/healthy-lifestyle/labor-and-delivery/in-depth/episiotomy/art-20047282?p=1>]
- What Treatments Can Reduce the Chances of Preterm Labor and Birth? [<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/preterm/conditioninfo/reduce>]
 (Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development)
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.nichd.nih.gov/salud/temas/preterm/informacion/tratamientos>]

Related Issues

- Cervical Length: Why Does It Matter during Pregnancy? [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/pregnancy-week-by-week/expert-answers/cervical-length/faq-20058357?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/healthy-lifestyle/pregnancy-week-by-week/expert-answers/cervical-length/faq-20058357?p=1>]
- Placenta Previa [<https://www.marchofdimes.org/find-support/topics/pregnancy/placenta-previa>] (March of Dimes Foundation)
- Placental Abruption [<https://www.marchofdimes.org/find-support/topics/pregnancy/placental-abruption>] (March of Dimes Foundation)
- Placental Accreta, Increta, and Percreta [<https://www.marchofdimes.org/find-support/topics/pregnancy/placental-accreta-increta-and-percreta>] (March of Dimes Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://nacersano.marchofdimes.org/embarazo/placenta-accreta-increta-y-percreta.aspx>]

Specifics

- Birth Injury in Newborns [<https://www.merckmanuals.com/home/children-s-health-issues/general-problems-in-newborns/birth-injuries-in-newborns>] (Merck & Co., Inc.)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.merckmanuals.com/es-us/hogar/salud-infantil/problemas-generales-del-recien-nacido/lesiones-neonatales-en-el-momento-del-parto>]
- Meconium Aspiration Syndrome (MAS) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/meconium.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/meconium.html>]
- Pregnancy: What to Expect When You're Past Your Due Date [<https://familydoctor.org/pregnancy-expect-youre-past-due-date/?adfree=true>] (American Academy of Family Physicians)
Also in Spanish [<https://es.familydoctor.org/embarazo-que-esperar-cuando-ya-ha-pasado-la-fecha-prevista-para-el-parto/?adfree=true>]
- Umbilical Cord Conditions [<https://www.marchofdimes.org/find-support/topics/birth/umbilical-cord-conditions>] (March of Dimes Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://nacersano.marchofdimes.org/embarazo/anomalias-del-cordon-umbilical.aspx>]

Images

- Breech - series -- Normal position of the baby [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100193_1.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/esp_presentations/100193_1.htm]

Statistics and Research

- PeriStats (Perinatal Statistics) [<https://www.marchofdimes.org/peristats/>] (March of Dimes Foundation)

Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Birth Injuries [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Birth+Injuries%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>] NIH (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Obstetric Labor Complications [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Obstetric+Labor+Complications%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>] NIH (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Obstetric complications, cortical gyration, and cognition in first-episode psychosis. [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40692512>]
- Article: Mode of delivery and maternal outcome in subsequent delivery after an... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40684100>]
- Article: Prevalence, clinical profile, maternal and perinatal outcomes of pregnancies complicated with... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40644442>]
- Childbirth Problems -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Obstetric+Labor+Complications%22%5Bmajr%3Aexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bedat%5D+NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

Find an Expert

- Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health [<https://womenshealth.gov/>] Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.womenshealth.gov/>]
- Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/>] NIH Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.nichd.nih.gov/>]
- How to Find Find an Ob-Gyn [<https://www.acog.org/womens-health/find-an-ob-gyn>] (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists)
- March of Dimes Foundation [<https://www.marchofdimes.org/>] Also in Spanish [<https://nacersano.marchofdimes.org/>]

Patient Handouts

- Assisted delivery with forceps [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000509.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia) Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000509.htm>]
- Brachial plexus injury in newborns [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001395.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia) Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001395.htm>]
- Breech birth [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000623.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia) Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000623.htm>]
- Caput succedaneum [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001587.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia) Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001587.htm>]
- Meconium aspiration syndrome [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001596.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia) Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001596.htm>]
- Premature rupture of membranes [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000512.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia) Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000512.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Assisted delivery with forceps [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000509.htm>]

Brachial plexus injury in newborns [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001395.htm>]

Breech - series -- Normal position of the baby [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100193_1.htm]

Breech birth [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000623.htm>]

Caput succedaneum [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001587.htm>]

Episiotomy - series [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100017_1.htm]

Fetal scalp pH testing [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003408.htm>]

Fractured clavicle in the newborn [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001588.htm>]

Meconium aspiration syndrome [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001596.htm>]

Placenta previa [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000900.htm>]

Premature rupture of membranes [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000512.htm>]

Sheehan syndrome [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001175.htm>]

Vacuum-assisted delivery [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000514.htm>]

When you pass your due date [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000515.htm>]

Your baby in the birth canal [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002060.htm>]

Related Health Topics

Cesarean Delivery [<https://medlineplus.gov/cesareandelivery.html>]

Childbirth [<https://medlineplus.gov/childbirth.html>]

Preterm Labor [<https://medlineplus.gov/pretermlabor.html>]

National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Childbirth Problems* is the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/Pages/index.aspx>]

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