



[Home](#) → [Health Topics](#) → Premature Babies

URL of this page: <https://medlineplus.gov/prematurebabies.html>

Premature Babies

Also called: Premies

Almost 1 of every 10 infants born in the United States are premature, or preemies. A premature birth [<https://medlineplus.gov/pretermlabor.html>] is when a baby is born before 37 completed weeks of pregnancy. A full-term pregnancy is 40 weeks.

Important growth and development happen throughout pregnancy - especially in the final months and weeks. Because they are born too early, preemies weigh much less [<https://medlineplus.gov/birthweight.html>] than full-term babies. They may have health problems because their organs did not have enough time to develop. Problems that a baby born too early may have include:

- Breathing problems [<https://medlineplus.gov/breathingproblems.html>]
- Feeding difficulties
- Cerebral palsy [<https://medlineplus.gov/cerebralpalsy.html>]
- Developmental delay [<https://medlineplus.gov/childdevelopment.html>]
- Vision problems [<https://medlineplus.gov/visionimpairmentandblindness.html>]
- Hearing problems [<https://medlineplus.gov/hearingproblemsinchildren.html>]


Preemies need special medical care in a neonatal intensive care unit, or NICU. They stay there until their organ systems can work on their own.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Start Here

- Health Issues of Premature Babies [<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/preemie/pages/Health-Issues-of-Premature-Babies.aspx>] (American Academy of Pediatrics)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.healthychildren.org/spanish/ages-stages/baby/preemie/paginas/health-issues-of-premature-babies.aspx>]
- Preterm Babies [<https://www.marchofdimes.org/find-support/topics/birth/preterm-babies>] (March of Dimes Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://nacersano.marchofdimes.org/complicaciones/bebes-prematuros.aspx>]
- Preterm Labor and Birth [<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/preterm>]
 (Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development)
- When Your Baby's Born Premature [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/preemies.html>] (Nemours Foundation)


Treatments and Therapies

- What Are the Common Treatments for Necrotizing Enterocolitis (NEC)?
[<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/nec/conditioninfo/treatments>]
 (Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development)
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.nichd.nih.gov/salud/temas/nec/informacion/tratamientos>]


Living With

- **Caring for Your Premature Baby** [<https://familydoctor.org/caring-for-your-premature-baby/?adfree=true>] (American Academy of Family Physicians)
Also in Spanish [<https://es.familydoctor.org/cuidado-de-su-bebe-premature/?adfree=true>]
- **Caring for Your Premature Baby at Home** [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/preemie-care.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/preemie-care.html>]
- **Common Parent Reactions to the NICU** [<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/preemie/pages/Common-Parent-Reactions-to-the-NICU.aspx>] (American Academy of Pediatrics)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.healthychildren.org/spanish/ages-stages/baby/preemie/paginas/common-parent-reactions-to-the-nicu.aspx>]
- **Family's Role in the NICU** [<https://www.marchofdimes.org/find-support/topics/neonatal-intensive-care-unit-nicu/familys-role-nicu>] (March of Dimes Foundation)
- **Feeding Your Baby in the NICU** [<https://www.marchofdimes.org/find-support/topics/neonatal-intensive-care-unit-nicu/feeding-your-baby-nicu>] (March of Dimes Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://nacersano.marchofdimes.org/complicaciones/alimentar-a-su-bebe-en-la-nicu.aspx>]
- **Immunizations for Preterm Babies** [<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/immunizations/pages/Immunizations-For-Preterm-Babies.aspx>] (American Academy of Pediatrics)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.healthychildren.org/spanish/safety-prevention/immunizations/paginas/immunizations-for-preterm-babies.aspx>]
- **Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)** [<https://www.marchofdimes.org/find-support/topics/nicu>] (March of Dimes Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://nacersano.marchofdimes.org/complicaciones/en-la-nicu.aspx>]
- **Transitioning Newborns from NICU to Home** [<https://www.ahrq.gov/patient-safety/settings/hospital/resource/nicu/index.html>] (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality)
- **Watching for Complications** [<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/preemie/pages/Watching-for-Complications.aspx>] (American Academy of Pediatrics)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.healthychildren.org/spanish/ages-stages/baby/preemie/paginas/watching-for-complications.aspx>]



Related Issues

- **Corrected Age for Preemies** [<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/preemie/pages/Corrected-Age-For-Preemies.aspx>] (American Academy of Pediatrics)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.healthychildren.org/spanish/ages-stages/baby/preemie/paginas/corrected-age-for-preemies.aspx>]
- **Cranial Ultrasound** [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/ultrasound-cranial>]
 (American College of Radiology; Radiological Society of North America)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/es/info/ultrasound-cranial>]
- **Overview of Early Intervention** [<https://www.parentcenterhub.org/ei-overview/>] (Center for Parent Information and Resources)
- **Skin-to-Skin Contact: How Kangaroo Care Benefits Your Baby** [<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/preemie/pages/About-Skin-to-Skin-Care.aspx>] (American Academy of Pediatrics)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.healthychildren.org/spanish/ages-stages/baby/preemie/paginas/about-skin-to-skin-care.aspx>]
- **When Your Baby's in the NICU (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit)** [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/nicu-caring.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/nicu-caring.html>]
- **Your Preemie's Growth and Developmental Milestones** [<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/preemie/pages/Preemie-Milestones.aspx>] (American Academy of Pediatrics)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.healthychildren.org/spanish/ages-stages/baby/preemie/paginas/preemie-milestones.aspx>]

Specifics

- **Apnea of Prematurity (For Parents)** [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/aop.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/aop.html>]
- **Bronchopulmonary Dysplasia (BPD)** [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/bronchopulmonary-dysplasia>]
 (National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute)



Also in Spanish [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/es/salud/displasia-broncopulmonar>]

- Necrotizing Enterocolitis [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/nec.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/nec.html>]
- Necrotizing Enterocolitis (NEC) [<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/nec>]
 **Easy-to-Read** (Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development)
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.nichd.nih.gov/salud/temas/nec>]
- Periventricular Leukomalacia [<https://www.ninds.nih.gov/health-information/disorders/periventricular-leukomalacia>]
 (National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke)
- Retinopathy of Prematurity [<https://www.nei.nih.gov/learn-about-eye-health/eye-conditions-and-diseases/retinopathy-prematurity>]  (National Eye Institute)
- Transient Tachypnea of the Newborn (TTN) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/ttn.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/ttn.html>]

Statistics and Research

- FastStats: Birthweight and Gestation [<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/birthweight.htm>] (National Center for Health Statistics)
- PeriStats (Perinatal Statistics) [<https://www.marchofdimes.org/peristats/>] (March of Dimes Foundation)

Clinical Trials


- ClinicalTrials.gov: Infant, Premature [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Infant,+Premature%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Infant, Premature, Diseases [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Infant,+Premature,+Diseases%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

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

- Article: Supporting mothers of discharged premature infants: a clinical trial on tele... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40721747>]
- Article: The effect of the use of positioning materials and hand-face maneuvers... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40691617>]
- Article: Effect of early sodium supplementation on weight gain of very preterm... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40659450>]
- Premature Babies -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Infant%2C+Premature%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+infant+%5Bmh%5D+OR+%22Infant%2C+Premature%2C+Diseases%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+infant+%5Bmh%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bdat%5D+AND+%28patient+education+handout%5Bpt%5D+OR+guideline%5Bpt%5D+OR+clinical+trial%5Bpt%5D%29++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

- Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/>] 
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.nichd.nih.gov/>]
- KidsHealth [<https://kidshealth.org/>] (Nemours Foundation)
- March of Dimes Foundation [<https://www.marchofdimes.org/>]
Also in Spanish [<https://nacersano.marchofdimes.org/>]

Patient Handouts

- Apnea of prematurity [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007227.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007227.htm>]

- **Bronchopulmonary dysplasia** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001088.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001088.htm>]
- **Intraventricular hemorrhage of the newborn** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007301.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007301.htm>]
- **Necrotizing enterocolitis** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001148.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001148.htm>]
- **Neonatal respiratory distress syndrome** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001563.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001563.htm>]
- **Neonatal weight gain and nutrition** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007302.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007302.htm>]
- **Osteopenia - premature infants** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007231.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007231.htm>]
- **Premature infant** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001562.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001562.htm>]
- **Preterm labor** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000486.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000486.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Apnea of prematurity [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007227.htm>]

Bronchopulmonary dysplasia [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001088.htm>]

Intraventricular hemorrhage of the newborn [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007301.htm>]

Necrotizing enterocolitis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001148.htm>]

Neonatal respiratory distress syndrome [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001563.htm>]

Neonatal weight gain and nutrition [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007302.htm>]

Osteopenia - premature infants [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007231.htm>]

Oxygen therapy in infants [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007242.htm>]

Periventricular leukomalacia [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007232.htm>]

Premature infant [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001562.htm>]

Preterm labor [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000486.htm>]

Retinopathy of prematurity [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001618.htm>]

Transient tachypnea - newborn [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007233.htm>]

Visiting your baby in the NICU [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000590.htm>]

Related Health Topics

Birth Weight [<https://medlineplus.gov/birthweight.html>]

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

National Institutes of Health

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

Other Languages

Find health information in languages other than English [<https://medlineplus.gov/languages/prematurebabies.html>] on *Premature Babies*

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