

Know The Signs of Preterm Labor

Preterm or premature labor is when you go into labor 3 or more weeks before your due date. This is too early and your baby could be born too soon. Here are the warning signs:

- Contractions every 10 minutes or more often
- Clear, pink or brownish fluid (water) leaking from your vagina
- The feeling that your baby is pushing down
- Low, dull backache
- Cramps that feel like your period
- Cramps with or without diarrhea

Know what to do.

Call your health care provider (nurse, doctor or midwife) or go to the hospital right away if you think you are having preterm labor, or if you have any of the warning signs. Call even if you have only one sign.

Your health care provider may tell you to:

- Come into the office or go to the hospital for a checkup.
- Stop what you are doing. Rest on your left side for one hour.
- Drink 2 to 3 glasses of water or juice (not coffee or soda).

If the symptoms get worse or do not go away after one hour, call your provider again or go to the hospital. If the symptoms get better, relax for the rest of the day.

Take care of yourself and your baby.

- Get regular prenatal checkups. Start as soon as you know you are pregnant. Go to every appointment.
- Stay away from alcohol and cigarettes. They are not good for you or your baby. Street drugs may start preterm labor.
- Try to avoid stress. Ask family and friends for help.
- If you feel burning or pain when you go to the bathroom, you may have an infection. Call your health care provider.