



## Preterm Delivery



### Overview

This is when a baby is born early. A full-term pregnancy lasts 40 weeks. A preterm delivery is one that happens before the baby reaches 37 weeks of pregnancy. We say the baby is "premature."

### Causes

Why are babies born early? It can happen when the mother is pregnant with more than one baby. It can be linked to infection, bleeding, stress or other problems. And sometimes, we don't know the cause.

### Complications

Babies born early usually weigh less than those carried to full term. They can be small and weak. They may have thin skin and little body fat. Premature babies can have a wide range of health problems and complications. These can include problems with breathing and digestion. They may have issues with their kidneys and nervous system. They can have other problems, too. Sometimes their health problems are lifelong.

### Special care

If you have a preterm delivery, your baby may need to stay in the hospital for special care. Your baby may need to stay in the hospital until they reach what would have been their full-term due date. This gives their body time to grow and develop. And even after you bring your baby home, you may need to give your baby special care. They may need extra oxygen, or a feeding tube. For more information, talk to your doctor.