

Premature babies

[Health & Medicine](#), [Pregnancy](#)



Premature babies are babies born before 37 weeks. For some babies they are born closer to their due dates and suffer from little to no consequences of being born preterm. Preterm infants is another word for premature that is defined as any infant born before their due date. Whereas the term small-for-date refers to babies that are born at the desired due date, but are below the expected weight for the length of time spent in the womb. About 500, 00 babies are born prematurely in the United States alone. Many premature babies are forced to spend extended times in hospitals and suffer from health problems that can affect later life. Premature infants need more intensive and immediate care than full term infants to help recovery and survival.

Certain activities or health problems put a woman at greater risk for having a preterm infant. Some women have no signs that they are going to deliver preterm. Some of the risks of having a preterm infant include multiple births and in vitro fertilization. Mothers carrying more than one baby have a greater risk of having their babies born premature or small-to-date. Also women that do not get proper prenatal care put themselves at greater risk to have a preterm infant. Unfortunately, some women can't afford the prenatal care necessary for the developing fetus or are not educated about behavior needed for a healthy pregnancy. They may not visit their doctor to help monitor the developing fetus and they may not be eating right.

Some mothers develop eating disorders because they feel their bodies are changing and they think they are fat or unattractive. These women put their unborn baby in danger because they deprive the infant of the necessary nutrients needed for proper growth and development. Mothers that are

overweight or underweight at conception also put their fetus at risk for being premature. Drug use, as in cigarettes and alcohol increase the risk of having a preterm baby, along with having a baby born with illnesses. Cigarettes use during pregnancy increases risks of asthma and difficulties breathing.

The more cigarettes a mother smokes while pregnant, increases the risks, even if the the mother quits in her third trimester of pregnancy she could still reduce the risk of premature birth of her baby and health issues associated withsmoking. Mothers who drink alcohol while pregnant increase the risks of premature births along with birth defects that are visible. Babies born to alcoholic parents suffer from Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) which has physical abnormalities and issues with memory, language andcommunication. Another factor that can increase risk for having a premature infant is illegal drug use.

About 4% of expecting mothers in the United States use mood altering drugs , like cocaine and heroin. Babies born from drug using parents are greater at risk for premature birth, breathing diffiiculties, physical defects and death shortly after birth. The infants are born addicted to the substance the mother was using and become irritable and stressed when the drug supply from the mother is cut off. Drug use is linked to memory, language and motor development impairment is youngchildhoodandacademicissues. High blood pressure anddiabetesalso increase the risk of having a premature baby.

Stresscan also bring about a premature birth. For other women, they may have no signs of having a premature baby and don't engage in any risky behavior during pregnancy , and still deliver babies prematurely. Infants

born prematurely need more care after birth to make sure they are able to survive and they have to be assessed for any abnormalities.

After birth premature babies are immediately put in incubators to keep the baby's body temperature warm as they are rushed to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). In the NICU they receive specialized attention and monitoring to make sure the infant survives. Monitor systems are usually hooked up to baby's chest to monitor breathing, heart rate, temperature. If the infant is having difficulty breathing, then the nurses in the NICU hook the baby up to a ventilator to help breathing stability. If the baby is weak and unable to breast feed or bottle feed, then IV fluid treatment is used to keep the baby hydrated along with feeding tube insertion.

Feeding tubes go through the infants nose and the tube travels to stomach to ensure the nutrients are getting into the infant. Nurses, Doctors and staff in the NICU work around the clock to ensure that babies vitals are stable and the infant is surviving. Babies born premature and jaundice are placed under bilirubin lights that help the infant break down excess bilirubin that builds up because the liver is not breaking in down. In some cases infants are given medications to help stabilize them.

Liquid surfactants are sprayed into the lungs to help under developed lungs develop. Antibiotics are given to infants that are at risk of infections or suffering from infections. Medications that increase urine production called diuretics are used to help the lungs and circulation. Medications are also given to strengthen breathing and heart rate. Infant's care is all specified to their particular illness and situation and the staff at the NICU work hard to be able to stabilize the babies for return to their mothers and family. Babies born

prematurely require more hospitalization and treatment than babies born normal term.

Luckily advances in technology have increased survival in infants born prematurely. The longer the pregnancy, the greater the chance of survival is. The development of new technology and creation of NICU in hospitals allows for proper and better treatment of infants born prematurely. 90% of babies born at 28 weeks survive and more extreme cases of premature babies are surviving with the modern medicine advancements in hospitals. Being born premature can affect future mental, developmental, and behavior problems that affect early childhood or become permanent. Doctors have no way of determining how prematurity will affect later development and growth.

Premature babies can suffer from health issues upon arrival into the world. Some premature infants develop Apnea. Apnea causes delayed breathing for 20 seconds or more and can also affect heart rate by decreasing it dramatically. Babies with Apnea are closely monitored and hooked up to breathing and monitoring devices to keep track of the infants breathing. Infants born prior to 34 weeks usually do not have fully developed lungs which makes them have Respiratory distress syndrome (RDS). In RDS the baby cannot breathe properly because they do not have a specific protein called surfactant. Surfactant is a protein that keeps small air sacs in the lungs from collapsing. Infants with RDS are immediately rushed to NICU and treated.

Another lung issue can be bronchopulmonary dysplasia (BPD) which is when babies have damage or fluid in their lungs. Another health problem is Intraventricular hemorrhage (IVH). This is when the infant's brain has internal

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bleeding which normally occurs near the ventricles near the center of the brain. Ventricles are spaces in the brain that are filled with fluid. These babies also need immediate emergency care. Some premature babies suffer from heart issues like Patent ductus arteriosus (PDA). This condition is when the connection between the ductus and the arteriosus is not closed properly causing breathing problems and even heartfailure.

Intestinal issues are sometimes also prevalent such as Necrotizing enterocolitis (NEC). This health problem causes a swollen belly and diarrhea and can appear 2 to 3 weeks after birth. Some infants are born anemic and do not have healthy red blood cells to carry oxygen to the body. Treatment sometimes involves blood transfusions. Other premature infants are born with jaundice which is when the liver does not function properly and babies are yellow in appearance. Babies are put in the bilirubin light incubators to help control and treat the issue. Premature babies can also be born with multiple infections such as pneumonia, meningitis and sepsis. Premature babies require more attention than full term healthy babies.

Infants born premature are also subject to issues later on in life. Studies show that babies born prematurely are more likely to get lower test scores in math and reading, than babies born full term. A study published in 2011 analyzed long term effects of cognitive abilities such as memory and attention p. In the study the researchers concluded that babies born extremely premature did worse on function test and took more time to complete IQ tests. Also adults that took IQ test scored an average of 8.4 points lower than adults born full term.

Another study conducted that babies born between 22 and 25 weeks were at risk for developing neurological impairments around 4 to 8 years old. In 2012 researchers from the University College London Institute for Women's health reported that even with advances in technology, the long term effects of being born prematurely have not changed in the past decades. Advances in technology have increased survival rate in infants born prematurely, but have not been able to change the issues with cognitive functions and higher risk for particular disorders.

Infants born prematurely are more likely to have weaker immune systems and develop respiratory issues, like asthma. This can be costly for the parents and in some cases lead to early death. Increases in NICU staff and technology have helped the premature babies and decrease many issues that used to be fatal. Unfortunately some issues still arise in later life due to lack of cognitive and physical development at birth. Premature babies need more care than full term babies because they are still fragile and some are barely ready for survival outside of the womb.

Premature births occur every day and steps can be taken to decrease the risks, but even with proper prenatal care delivering preterm still can occur. Premature babies need excessive immediate care to help increase survival and decrease disabilities and disadvantages of being born preterm. Premature infants are born under developed and need intensive care to help make sure they are able to develop outside of the womb and survive with the ability to normally function.

Doctors and nurses of the NICU work around the clock to help infants born preterm stabilize and to prepare them for transition into the real world.

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Parents and family all eagerly wait for their infants to be able to go home. Preterm infants need more care than full term infants immediately following delivery due to the fact that preterm infants should still be developing in the womb.