

Avoiding Preterm Labor

What is preterm labor?

Term pregnancy occurs at 37 weeks. This is when your baby is most likely ready to live outside of your uterus without any assistance. When signs of labor occur prior to 37 weeks and after 20 weeks, we call this preterm labor. Many times preterm contractions are experienced first and intervention can enable the pregnancy to go to term for a healthy delivery.

You will know you are experiencing preterm labor if your uterus gets hard when you are having rhythmic lower back pain or abdominal cramping. If your water breaks, this is a definite sign and you should call your midwife right away.

Can I prevent preterm labor?

Preterm labor can occur in pregnancies with short intervals between them or being pregnant with multiples. Sometimes preterm labor is caused by abnormalities in the cervix or uterus, but often it is caused by a lack of minerals and inadequate nutrition. Even though you might be eating healthy foods, you might not be getting enough of certain nutrients. If you eat the standard American diet, then a diet overhaul could be just what you need!

What can I eat to avoid preterm labor?

If you want to experience the healthiest pregnancy possible, pay close attention to your diet. If you have a history of preterm labor, the following suggestions may help:

- Eat a clean diet: No sugar or white flour, only grass-fed organic meats, raw milk only, and eat plenty of raw organic vegetables and whole grains
- Drink 2-3 cups of nettle infusion daily
- Vitamin C, 1,000 mg daily
- Vitamin E, 1,000-1,200 mg daily
- Desiccated liver as a source of iron, 1 tablet daily
- Red raspberry infusion (can be combined with the Nettle infusion) for calcium and magnesium
- No synthetic supplements or vitamins

What else can I do?

If you do not have a history of preterm labor but find that you are experiencing contractions preterm, notify your midwife immediately.

- Drink 2 large glasses of water to rule out dehydration
- Get off of your feet. If your job entails standing for long periods of time or heavy lifting, your body may be telling you that it's too much.
- False Unicorn Root tincture, 5 drops every 5 minutes (every 15 minutes if your contractions are not that intense), and extend increments between doses as contractions ease off. Take it for several days.
- Black haw tea can calm your uterus.
- Skullcap tincture, 30 drops every half hour until contractions stop.
- If you are breastfeeding another child, stop.
- Refrain from sexual activity, especially orgasm.
- Explore anything that may be causing stress or anxiety and try to resolve it.

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Midwifery Practice Documents
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Tharpe, N. (2013). *Clinical practice guidelines for midwifery & women's health*. (4th ed.) Sudbury, Mass.: Jones and Bartlett Publishers.