

## What is Premature Labour?

Pregnancy normally ends with labour at about 40 weeks (9 months). If labour happens before the 37th week (8 1/2 months) of pregnancy, it is premature.

## Why Should I Know About it?

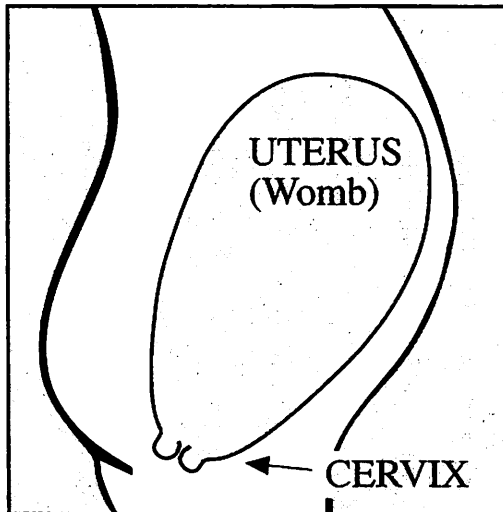
Babies born prematurely may have serious problems breathing, eating and keeping warm.

If you know what to look for, you will be able to tell if premature labour begins to happen to you. You can get help to stop it, and may be able to prevent your baby from being born too early.

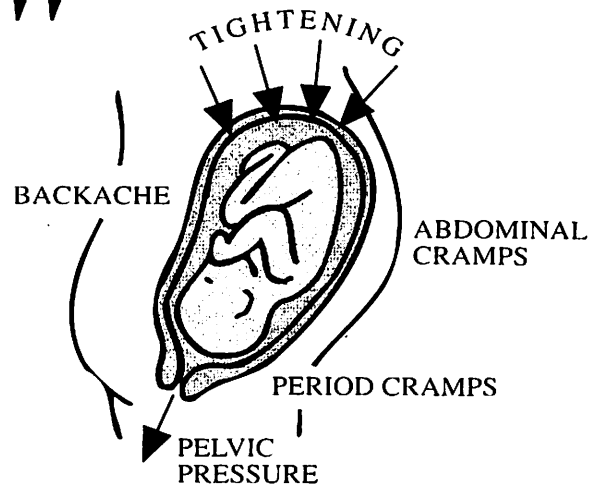
Even if you are tired of being pregnant, the baby needs the whole nine months to grow.

## What Happens?

The womb (*uterus*) has tightenings that make the mouth of the womb (*cervix*) open and the baby may be pushed out too soon.



## What are the warning signs?

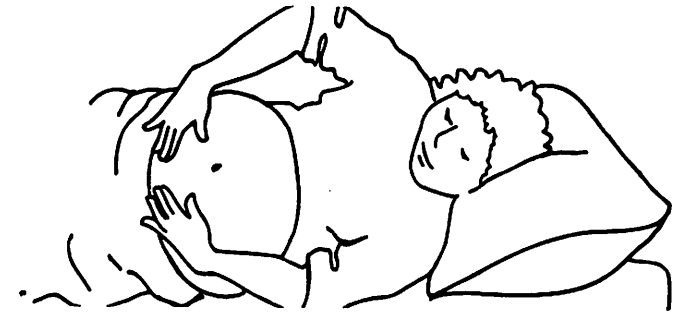


- **UTERINE CONTRACTIONS**  
*(tightenings of your uterus or a feeling like the baby is "balling up") which happen every 15 minutes or closer. They may or may not be painful.*
- **MENSTRUAL-LIKE CRAMPS**  
*which may come and go or be constant.*
- **LOW DULL BACKACHE**  
*felt near your tailbone which comes and goes or doesn't go away.*
- **PELVIC PRESSURE**  
*that feels like the baby is pushing down or is going to fall out.*
- **ABDOMINAL (Stomach) CRAMPS**  
*with or without diarrhea.*
- **VAGINAL DISCHARGE**  
*(leaking from down below) may suddenly increase in amount, or become mucousy, watery, or slightly bloody.*
- **FEELING BAD**  
*a general feeling that something is not right.*

## What Should I Do?

Call your doctor right away if:  
~ you have any fluid from your vagina  
~ you have any blood from your vagina

If you have any of the other warning signs -  
1. Stop what you are doing.



2. Lie down with a pillow behind your back so you are tilted to your left side.  
**Do not lie flat on your back.**  
Rest and check for contractions for 1 hour.  
*(See the diagram and instructions for "How to check for contractions" on the next page).*
3. Drink 2-3 glasses of juice or water.
4. If the symptoms go away after that hour, you can carry on with light activity, but do not return to what you were doing when the symptoms began.
5. If you have 4 or more contractions in 1 hour, or if the warning signs do not go away, call your doctor or go into the hospital right away.

***Waiting too long to call for help could result in your baby being born too soon.***