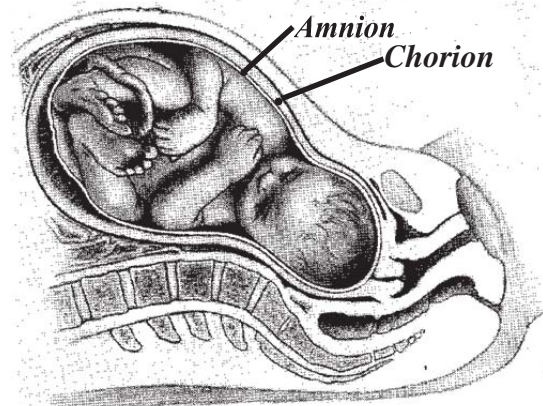


## When Your Water Breaks Early

This is also known as premature rupture of membranes or PROM.

The Antepartum Home Care Nursing Team and your doctor will help keep you and your baby safe and healthy while you are at home.

The membranes are formed of 2 layers. The thin, transparent layer closest to the baby is called the **amnion**. The membrane closest to the mother is called the **chorion**. This chorion sticks the amnion to the sidewall of the uterus. These membranes act as a barrier to possible infections..



Most frequently asked questions	Page
❖ What exactly are membranes?.....	1
❖ Does this mean there is no fluid to protect the baby? .....	1
❖ Why has my water broken?.....	1
❖ What does this mean for the baby?.....	1
❖ What can be done about the leaking? ...	2
❖ How do I avoid early labour and birth? ..	2
❖ What will my nurse do? .....	2
❖ How do I avoid infection? .....	3
❖ How do I know my baby is doing okay? ..	3
❖ What can I do every day to help my baby? .....	3
❖ What do I do if I think my baby's cord has come out?.....	3
❖ When to call for help?.....	4

### What happens when my water breaks?

A small hole forms in the membranes either at the cervix or higher up. The amniotic fluid leaks either in a slow trickle or a gush through the vagina. The fluid around the baby continues to be produced by the baby's kidneys and lungs. This is also called "Ruptured Membranes."

### What does this mean for the baby?

**It may** be a warning sign that labour is about to begin. Babies born before 34 weeks may need to spend time in the nursery to help with their breathing, feeding, and keeping warm. Ask your nurse or doctor for more details.

### What exactly are "membranes"?

Babies grow and develop inside a fluid filled sac like a water balloon. The fluid helps to protect the baby and make space for the baby to move in.

**It may** mean that the leaking continues for the rest of the pregnancy. This could lead to an infection in you or your baby.

**It may** mean that the baby's cord is more likely to get squeezed when the baby is moving. **Rarely**, the cord can fall in front of the baby's head and come through the cervix. This is called a **prolapsed cord**. This is an emergency situation.

## What can be done about the leaking?

There is no way to plug the hole in the membranes. All treatment is aimed at:

- ❖ Helping you to avoid early labour and birth.
- ❖ Keeping your baby safe from infection.
- ❖ Watching for infection so that early treatment can begin.
- ❖ Ensuring that your baby is growing normally.
- ❖ Teaching you what to do if your baby's cord comes through the cervix.

## How do I avoid “early” labour and birth?

- ❖ Reduce your activity.
- ❖ You do not need to rest in bed all day, in fact, some activity is good for you. Your nurse will review the activity level guide with you and help you to decide how much rest you need.
- ❖ Wear loose clothes, for comfort and to keep uterus relaxed.
- ❖ Avoid constipation. Eat whole grain foods, fruits and vegetables, and drink 6-8 glasses of water each day.

## Become aware of your body signals of “early” labour

### How can I tell if my uterus is contracting?

- ❖ It is normal for your uterus to have some contractions throughout pregnancy. These are called Braxton Hicks contractions. They help tone the muscle for labour, and prepare your baby for labour.

- ❖ If the contractions are painful, they may signal labour.

It often hard to tell the difference between your baby moving and your uterus contracting. Many women do it this way:

- ❖ Get comfortable, place the palm of your hands over top of your uterus. Keep them there.
- ❖ When your uterus contracts you will feel your tummy become firm and slowly push into your hands and then as the contraction goes away your belly will slowly become soft and return to its former shape.
- ❖ Counting the contractions: Note the time, when one contraction starts and again when the next one starts.
- ❖ Count contractions once each day and repeat if you notice more tightenings or contractions than usual for you.

### Know the warning signs:

- ❖ If you feel regular contractions every 15 minutes or more often (4 or more in one hour), you need to call for help.
- ❖ Discomfort or pain felt in the lower belly. It may feel like menstrual cramps. It may be constant or come and go.
- ❖ Bowel cramping, with or without diarrhea.

## What will my nurse do?

- ❖ Help me understand how to check for:
  - contractions.
  - baby movements.
  - signs of infection and early labour.
- ❖ Help me with My Pregnancy Diary.
- ❖ Visit me daily.
- ❖ Answer my questions about pregnancy, labour and birth.
- ❖ Report to my doctor when needed.

## How do I avoid infection?

- ❖ Do “pericare” after using the toilet. The nurse will teach you about this.
- ❖ Change your sanitary pads when wet. Do not wear tampons.
- ❖ Use the shower only. Do not bathe.
- ❖ Do not use douches.
- ❖ Avoid intercourse.
- ❖ Change bed linens if dirty/wet.

### Look for these signs of infection:

- ❖ Feeling unwell.
- ❖ Fever temperature (above 37.5<sup>o</sup> Celsius or 99.5<sup>o</sup> Fahrenheit).
- ❖ Pulse rate over 100 beats per minute.
- ❖ Change in vaginal discharge.
  - Smell – is it unusual?
  - Colour – is it cloudy, yellow or green?
- ❖ Belly tenderness or pain.
- ❖ Painful contractions.

## How do I know my baby is doing okay?

### Read the Baby Movement Counting handout

Count fetal movement twice each day (morning and evening).

#### *Know the warning signs.*

If you feel less than 6 movements in 2 hours call Antepartum Home Care between 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. If this happens after 4:30 pm call your doctor.

### Fetal Heart Rate

Your baby’s heart rate tells us how they are doing through heart rate changes. Your nurse will listen to and count the fetal heart rate daily. 3 times a week, your nurse will use a fetal heart rate monitor. This machine records the heart beat on a slow moving graph paper. The recording will take from 20 minutes to one hour.

## Ultrasound Scan

- ❖ Shows how your baby is growing.
- ❖ Checks the amount of fluid still around the baby.
- ❖ Measures your baby’s blood flow through the umbilical cord to the placenta. This is called Doppler Flow.

## What can I do every day to help myself and my baby?

- ❖ Check for signs of infection 4 times a day.
  - take your temperature and pulse.
  - check your vaginal discharge.
- ❖ Be aware for signs of early labour.
  - Put your hands on your belly to count your contractions.
- ❖ Fill in My Pregnancy Diary.
  - do my baby movement count twice each day.
- ❖ Visit my doctor in the office when scheduled.
- ❖ Visit the ultrasound department when scheduled.

## What do I do if I think my baby’s cord has come out? (This is called a prolapsed cord)

This possibility is **very rare** but can be dangerous for your baby. If you feel something in your vagina or between your legs:

- ❖ Act quickly to call 911 for an ambulance to go to the nearest hospital.
- ❖ Unlock your front door or have someone else do it for you.
- ❖ Get on your hands and knees. Lower your chest to the floor so that your hips are up in the air.\*
- ❖ Breathe slowly and know that this position helps take the pressure off your baby’s cord. Your nurse will role play this emergency with you.

## When to Call for Help

If you develop any of the following symptoms, contact your Home Care nurse right away during office hours at 604-875-3557. If your nurse does not return your call in 15 minutes, call your doctor.

### **Signs of infection**

- temperature above 37.5°C or 99.5° F
- pulse above 100 beats per minute
- tender or painful belly
- change in vaginal discharge
- bad or off smelling amniotic fluid

### **Signs and symptoms of Premature Labour**

- uterine contractions every 15 minutes or more often
- low, dull backache
- menstrual-like cramps
- bowel cramping with or without diarrhea
- more leaking of amniotic fluid
- presence of pelvic/vaginal pressure

### **Other:**

- less than 6 baby movements in two hours.

### **Call 911, go to the hospital by ambulance if you have:**

- vaginal bleeding like a period
- prolapsed cord

### **How to contact the Antepartum Home Care Program between 8:30am–4:30pm**

Office: 604-875-3557

If you need to speak to us right away, leave an urgent message.

- state your name and phone number
- Press the number sign (#) then 701. We will be alerted there is a message

**Paging:** 604-875-2161

- Ask for the “Antepartum Home Care Nurse” Pager 02455.
- Stay on line or leave your telephone number with the operator.

**After 4:30 pm and before 8:30 am**

**Call your doctor:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Or call the BC Women’s Urgent Care Centre at 604-875-3070**