

Threatened Preterm Labour

This information will help you understand how your Home Care Nursing Team and your doctor are planning to keep you and your baby safe and healthy while you are at home.

Most frequently asked questions	Page
❖ What is threatened preterm labour?	1
❖ What does this mean for my baby?	1
❖ What can be done?	1
❖ How can I tell if I have early labour?	2
❖ How do I help my uterus relax?	2
❖ How do I know that my baby is healthy?	2
❖ What will my nurse do?	3
❖ What do I need to do every day to help myself and my baby?	3
❖ When do I need to call for help?	3

What is Threatened Preterm Labour?

This is a medical term for labour that happens at least 3 or more weeks before your expected date of birth.

What does this mean for my baby?

It could mean you can give birth to your baby before their due date. Babies born before 37 weeks gestation are considered premature and may have more problems with breathing, feeding and keeping warm. Ask your nurse or doctor for more details.

What can be done?

The care team works together to help you to:

- ❖ Watch for signs of early labour so you get care as soon as possible
 - ❖ Keep your uterus relaxed.
 - ❖ Give you medicine which will make your baby's lungs stronger if they are born early.
 - ❖ Look after yourself and your growing baby.

How can I tell if I have early labour?

It is normal part of pregnancy for your uterus to have some painless contractions. These are called Braxton Hicks contractions or tightenings. They help tone the uterine muscle for labour and prepare your baby for labour.

If the contractions are regular or painful, they may signal labour.

It is 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 belly. Keep them there. When your uterus contracts, you will feel your tummy become firm and slowly push into hands and then as the contraction goes away your tummy 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.
- ❖ Do this twice each day if you notice more tightenings/contractions than is usual for you.

Know the warning signs

- ❖ If you feel the regular contractions every 15 minutes or less (4 or more in one hour) read the last page for what to do next.
- ❖ Discomfort or pain felt in the back or lower belly. It may feel like menstrual cramps. It may be constant or come and go.
- ❖ Bowel cramping, with or without diarrhea.
- ❖ Low pelvic pressure.
- ❖ Bleeding or spotting.

How do I Help my Uterus “Relax”?

Reduce your activity.

You do not need to rest in bed, in fact, some activity is good for you. Most women need to stop work outside of their home.

Your nurse will review the activity level guide with you and help you decide how much rest you need.

Wear loose clothing

Anything tight around your tummy can cause more contractions. Wear loose clothing and feel the difference!

Eat healthy meals

Full of whole grain foods, fruits and vegetables which helps to reduce constipation.

Drink plenty of water (6 to 8 glasses every day)

This helps you avoid constipation and helps relax your uterus.

If you smoke, stop or cut back

Smoking may be a cause of contractions. Nicotine constricts the small blood vessels in your uterus and some of your red blood cells will become unable to carry oxygen. This is not good for your baby's health.

Get plenty of sleep

Make sure that you get 8 to 9 hours sleep every 24 hours. Help yourself sleep well by:

- ❖ Not drinking coffee or having drinks with caffeine after 6 pm.
- ❖ Make sure you have plenty of pillows for your legs and tummy so you can get comfortable.

How do I know that my baby is okay?

Read the Baby Movement Counting handout

Count movements once each day.

Know the warning signs

If you feel less than 6 movements in two hours, call Antepartum Home Care between 8:30 am and 4:30 pm at 604-875-3557. 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 briefly listen to your baby's heart rate at every visit using a doptone. Once a week the doctor may get a more detailed report using 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.
- ❖ Estimates the amount of fluid still around your baby.
- ❖ Measures your baby's blood flow to the placenta. This is called Doppler Flow.
- ❖ Your cervix will also be measured regularly with a vaginal scan up to 32 weeks into your pregnancy so that small changes aren't missed.

What will my nurse do?

- ❖ Help me understand the special needs of my pregnancy and how to assess for:
 - Uterine contractions.
 - Baby movements.
- ❖ Assess me and my baby for signs of preterm labour.
- ❖ Help me with My Pregnancy Diary.
- ❖ Visit me once or twice a week (each visit to be between ½ - 1 hour).
- ❖ Report to my doctor when needed.
- ❖ Answer my questions about pregnancy, labour and birth.

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

- ❖ Fill in My Pregnancy Diary.
 - Do my baby movement count once each day.
 - Check for signs of early labour.
 - Place my hands on uterus to feel for contractions twice each day.
- ❖ Eat healthy meals.
- ❖ Drink 6 to 8 glasses of water.
- ❖ If I smoke, stop or cut down.
- ❖ Make sure I get the rest I need.
- ❖ Visit my doctor in the office when scheduled.
- ❖ Visit the ultrasound department when scheduled.

When do I call for help?

If you develop any of the following symptoms between 8:30-4:30, contact your Home Care nurse immediately at 604-875-3557. If your nurse does not return your call in 15 minutes or it is after 4:30pm, call your doctor.

Signs and Symptoms of Preterm Labour (4 or more in one hour)

- Regular uterine contractions every 15 minutes or less
- Menstrual-like cramps which may be constant for one hour or come and go
- Low, dull backache
- Bowel cramping, with or without diarrhea
- A change or increase in vaginal discharge
- Bleeding/spotting

Other:

- Less than 6 baby movements in 2 hours

Call the hospital, then go immediately if you have:

- Gush or trickle of fluid from vagina

Call 911, and go immediately to the hospital by ambulance if you:

- Have vaginal bleeding
- Feel pressure in your pelvis like the baby is pushing down

How to contact the Antepartum Home Care Program between 8:30 am and 4:30 pm -

Office: 604-875-3557

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

- State your name and phone number
- Press the number sign, #, then 701. We will get your message right away.

Paging: 604-875-2161

- Ask for the "Antepartum Home Care Nurse" pager 02445
- Stay on the 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 : 604-875-3070

