

facts on

For More Information

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Preterm Labour

What is preterm labour?

Preterm labour is labour that begins before 37 completed weeks of pregnancy (less than 259 days). A full-term pregnancy lasts 37 to 42 weeks. Early in pregnancy, it is important to have an ultrasound to confirm your due date.

How often does preterm labour happen?

Preterm birth occurs in approximately 8.2% of pregnancies in Canada.

Why is it important to learn about preterm labour?

Preterm labour can result in the birth of a premature baby. The closer a baby is born to the due date, the better it is for the baby's health. Premature babies account for 60 to 70% of all infant deaths in babies born without birth defects.

Babies born prematurely may need treatment in special care facilities and be more likely to have problems with:

- Temperature instability
- Breathing (Respiratory Distress Syndrome [RDS])
- Eating
- Infections
- Jaundice

Babies born very early may also:

- Need to be treated medically in incubators or radiant warmers
- Develop long term difficulties with walking, vision, learning and emotional or physical development
- Have an increased risk of illness and hospitalization
- Have a higher risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)

Who is at risk for preterm labour?

Preterm labour can happen to any pregnant woman and cannot always be prevented or stopped if it starts. It is not clearly understood what causes preterm labour but there are certain risk factors that seem to be closely associated with preterm labour.

These include:

- Preterm labour or miscarriage in previous pregnancy
- Poor nutrition
- Too little or too much weight gain during pregnancy
- Dehydration
- Smoking, using alcohol, and/or drugs during pregnancy
- Stress or depression
- Physical or emotional abuse
- Repeated urinary or genital infections during pregnancy (bacterial vaginosis)
- Medical conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure, or abnormalities of the placenta and/or cervix
- Carrying multiple babies (i.e. twins, triplets)
- Strenuous exercise or heavy physical work
- Age of pregnant woman (under 18 years or over 35 years)

Can preterm labour be prevented?

Preterm labour cannot always be prevented or stopped if it starts. Pregnant women can follow these measures to reduce the risk of preterm labour:

- See your doctor or midwife early and regularly for prenatal appointments
- Keep track of reproductive health and pregnancy symptoms
- Choose healthy foods more often and follow Canada's Food Guide

- Get lots of rest
- Avoid alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs
- Learn about the signs of preterm labour
- Avoid vaginal douching
- Find healthy ways of dealing with stress
- Maintain good oral health

What are the signs of preterm labour?

Despite all precautions, preterm labour may still occur. It is very important that a pregnant woman and those around her be able to recognize the signs of preterm labour.

These signs include:

- Increase or change in vaginal discharge and/or bleeding (sudden gush or constant slow leak of fluid from the vagina)
- Regular contractions that may or may not be painful
- Period-like or stomach cramps (with or without diarrhea)
- Constant ache in the lower back
- Pressure in the pelvic area (sensation that the baby is pushing down)

What should be done if a pregnant woman is experiencing signs of preterm labour?

Preterm labour is a serious situation. A pregnant woman should listen to what her body is telling her. It is not always easy for a woman to know if she is in preterm labour. If a pregnant woman experiences any of the signs above, she should call her doctor or go to the hospital. Early diagnosis of preterm labour is important.

If a woman has possible signs of preterm birth, she should get medical help immediately. Early treatment may improve newborn outcomes.

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List of items to pack for the hospital

- Lip balm
- Massage oil
- Snack and drinks for you and your support person
- Partner's swimsuit for tub or shower
- Camera
- Phone
- Music player and headphones
- A picture, design or figure to use as a focal point
- Contact information for friends and family
- Socks or slippers
- Dental care products
- Hair care products
- Skin care products
- Other personal items

Personal items for after baby is born:

- 2-3 nightgowns or pairs of pajamas
- Nursing bra and pads
- At least 3 pairs of underwear
- Socks / slippers
- Sanitary pads
- Clothes to wear home (loose fitting)

Items for Baby:

- Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (CMVSS) approved infant seat
- Diapers
- Undershirts and sleepers
- Sweater and hat
- Blanket
- Soft carrier or sling

Make sure to have sleepers, clothes, diapers, wipes, receiving blankets, and a safe, firm sleeping space ready to go for when you arrive home.



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Great Reasons to Breastfeed your Baby

Breastfeeding is best for you and your baby

To find out why turn the page...



Public Health
Agency of Canada

Agence de la santé
publique du Canada

Canada

Today, most mothers are choosing to breastfeed their babies. As more Canadians understand just how much of a difference breastfeeding makes to the health of both the mother and her baby, more families are supporting mothers to breastfeed longer, up to 2 years and beyond.

Here are 10 Great Reasons to Breastfeed your Baby:

To promote and protect the health of Canadians through leadership, partnership, innovation and action in public health.

— Public Health Agency of Canada

This publication was developed by the Public Health Agency of Canada in partnership with the Breastfeeding Committee for Canada (www.breastfeedingcanada.ca)

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This Publication is also available in PDF format (Colour and B&W) on the Internet at the following address: www.publichealth.gc.ca/breastfeeding.

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Nutrients and Protection

Breast milk is the best food to help your baby to grow and develop. It is custom-made by each mother for her own baby, and contains the perfect amount of protein, carbohydrate, fat, vitamins and minerals. Remarkably, as your baby grows, your milk will also change to keep up with your baby's needs. Human milk is also easier than formula for your baby to digest, which means less mess and fuss!

Breast milk contains valuable antibodies that help prevent disease and may reduce the risk of your baby developing allergies. After birth, your first milk, called ***Colostrum***, offers vital early protection and helps to prevent the growth of harmful bacteria by coating your baby's digestive system. This early protection is even more important if your baby is born prematurely – ***Colostrum protects!***



Brain Power

There is strong evidence that children who were breastfed score higher on IQ tests, as well as on teacher ratings of their academic performance.



Convenient and Portable

Breast milk is always safe, fresh and exactly the right temperature. It's ready for baby at a moment's notice, and you don't have to heat it, boil water, or sterilize bottles. This makes night time feedings a lot easier.

Since breast milk is always with you, travelling and shopping with your baby is simpler, with no equipment to carry or refrigeration needed.



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Size Doesn't Matter

The size of your breasts doesn't matter. Big or small, they will produce milk for your baby. Breasts begin to prepare for baby very early in pregnancy and are able to produce Colostrum (the first milk) from about 24 weeks of pregnancy. As soon as your baby is born, hormones begin to activate the breasts to make more milk for your baby. You will continue to produce milk through the wonderful partnership of supply and demand – *the more your baby breastfeeds – the more milk you will produce!*

Benefits Mothers Too

Research suggests that breastfeeding provides a measure of protection against breast cancer, ovarian cancer and weak bones later in life.

Your body uses calories to produce milk, so breastfeeding can help you to gradually lose weight gained during pregnancy. Exclusive breastfeeding may also delay the return of menstruation for at least a little while.

Continues the Special Relationship

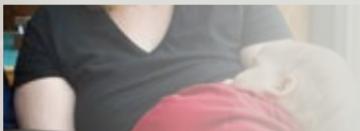
The closeness and comfort of breastfeeding strengthens the bond with your baby, as one part of all the things you can do to build a secure, loving relationship. Dads and moms can't spoil a baby, so give your baby all the cuddling she or he wants.





Benefits Don't Stop

Research shows that breast milk is so important that it is the **only food or drink your baby needs for the first 6 months of life**. Beginning at 6 months of age babies need a variety of foods in addition to breast milk, which continues to provide nutrition and protection. Many mothers continue to breastfeed until their babies are two years old or more, as recommended by Health Canada – any amount of breastmilk is always good for babies.



Easy on the Budget

Breastfeeding saves you money! Without question, breastfeeding saves hundreds – even thousands – of dollars.



Works for Working Mothers

Your baby can have all the benefits of your milk even if you plan to go back to work or school. You can express milk by hand or with a breast pump and leave it with your caregiver to feed the baby. Breast milk can also be frozen for future use.

Some mothers have childcare facilities at their place of work, school, or nearby, so they can breastfeed during their breaks.



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Good for Environment

Breastfeeding is good for your baby, for you and the environment! Human milk is produced and delivered to the consumer – your baby - without any pollution, unnecessary packaging or waste.



Ask for Breastfeeding Advice and Support – it is worth it!

Breastfeeding is natural, but learning to breastfeed can sometimes take a little time and patience. There are many groups and individuals available to help you, including: public health nurses, lactation consultants, the La Leche League, your doctor, midwife, family members or friends who have breastfed.

For more information on where to get breastfeeding advice and support, please visit the Public Health Agency of Canada at the following web address: www.publichealth.gc.ca/breastfeeding Also available on this website, is the **10 Valuable Tips for Successful Breastfeeding**, a guide to help make your breastfeeding experience successful and enjoyable.

Breastfeeding Friendly



ANYTIME. ANYWHERE.