



Premature Birth

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Quick Take:

Prematurity is the leading cause of neonatal death – accounting for nearly 24 percent of deaths in the first month of life.

Note!

Less than 37 weeks...

Go to

Cabell
Huntington
Hospital

37 weeks or over...

Go to
St. Mary's
Hospital

Or

Cabell
Huntington
Hospital

When is a baby considered premature?

A full-term pregnancy lasts 40 weeks. Babies need this length of time to grow and develop. If a baby is born before 37 weeks, it is considered premature. Occasionally, babies born closer to their due date still have the problems of prematurity.

Premature infants weigh less than full term infants. They often have difficulty breathing, digesting food and maintaining a normal body temperature. Some will require the help of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Cabell Huntington Hospital. Some babies will need a machine to assist them in breathing and a warming bed to keep their temperatures up.

Prematurity can lower survival or lead to permanent disability!

What causes premature labor and birth?

No one knows for sure why babies are born early. However, risks include:

- Induction of labor prior to due date for any reason
- Previous premature delivery or prior miscarriages
- Double or divided uterus, or weak cervix due to surgery
- Twins or Triplets
- Other pregnancy illnesses such as diabetes, kidney disease, urinary tract infections, bacterial vaginal infections, placenta previa or abruption
- The risk increases in women who **smoke, use drugs, have a poor diet or who are under stress**

How will I know if I am in premature labor?

The symptoms of premature labor are:

- Greater than 4 contractions per hour before 37 weeks of pregnancy
- Menstrual-like cramps or a change in backache
- Gush of fluid from the vagina or increase in discharge
- Vaginal bleeding (even spotting)

Alert our office if you are experiencing any of the above symptoms. If you cannot reach our office, choose the hospital by the criteria to the left and go directly to labor and delivery at the appropriate hospital!