

my body

preterm labor

Due dates

Your due date is 40 weeks from the first day of your last period. A pregnancy is considered “full term” at 37 weeks and it’s normal to birth your baby anytime between 37 weeks and 42+ weeks. Babies born before 37 weeks are considered preterm or premature.

Why can preterm labor be a problem?

Babies born prematurely may have health problems because they haven’t had as much time to grow and develop. In general, the earlier a preterm baby is born, the more likely they are to have severe problems.



20 - 36 weeks	37 - 42 weeks
preterm	regular term



Signs of preterm labor

- Uterine contractions are tightenings of the uterus muscle that can be painless or feel like cramping. Occasional contractions are typical in pregnancy. But coming one after another in a predictable pattern may be a concern. If contractions are every ten minutes or less, call your midwife.
- Preterm labor may cause a feeling of pelvic pressure. If you feel a sudden change in the pressure you feel, call your midwife.
- Preterm labor can also cause vaginal bleeding, or pink or brown vaginal discharge. Leaking amniotic fluid may also be a sign of preterm labor. If you notice a change in your discharge, call your midwife.



What to do if you might be in preterm labor

1. Go to the bathroom and pee.
2. Drink a liter of plain water.
3. Lie down on your side and rest.
4. Set a timer for an hour. Count your contractions. If you have more than five contractions in an hour, call your midwife.



**If you have any of the following happen,
call your midwife immediately:**

- If contractions are ten minutes apart or less.
- Heavy vaginal bleeding. Save any pads you soak and bring them to the hospital to show your midwife.
- Your water breaks, which can be a large gush of fluid or a steady trickle. Save any pads you soak and bring them to the hospital to show your midwife.
- Severe stomach pain.