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PRETERM LABOR

Preterm labor is defined as uterine contractions that last longer than 30 seconds, but less than 2 minutes. They occur 4 or more times in 1 hour and are significant if occurring before 35 weeks. If you think you are having contractions, drink 3-4 glasses of water and lie on your side for 30 minutes. If the contractions stop, continue resting. If they continue, call the doctor. Call your doctor immediately if you have any bleeding, rupture of membranes, six contractions in 1 hour, or if the baby is not moving well.

RISKS FOR PRETERM LABOR

- More than one baby**
- Previous preterm labor**
- Several induced abortions**
- Abnormalities of the uterus (incompetent cervix, malformation, fibroids)**
- Abdominal surgery**
- Infections in the mother**
- Bleeding in the second trimester of pregnancy**
- Underweight mothers (less than 100 pounds)**
- Placenta previa**
- Premature rupture of membranes**
- High blood pressure**
- Maternal chronic illness**
- Smoking and use of illegal drugs**

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF PRETERM LABOR

- Uterine contractions**
- Abdominal pain/cramps**
- Feeling of baby "balling up" or "falling out"**
- Pelvic pressure**
- Lower back pain and upper thigh pain**
- Change in vaginal discharge (increased amount, watery, bloody, or mucous)**

The following signs may also occur normally in your pregnancy, but if you feel any of the following, monitor for uterine contractions:

- Menstrual like cramps or intestinal cramps**
- Lower, dull back ache**
- Pelvic pressure**
- Increase or change in vaginal discharge**