

Preterm Labour

Care at Home

Jim Pattison Outpatient Care and Surgery Centre

9750 – 140th Street, Surrey, BC

Maternity Clinics:

Antepartum Care at Home Program (ACAHP)

Office: 604-582-4559

Hours: 8:45AM to 4:15PM, 7 days a week

After hours call: 604-585-5572

(Surrey Memorial Hospital Triage)

Closest hospital: _____

Royal Columbian Hospital

330 East Columbia Street, New Westminster, BC

Antepartum Care at Home Program (ACAHP)

Office: 604-520-4182

Hours: 7:30AM to 3:30PM, 7 days a week

After hours call: 604-520-4587

(Royal Columbian Hospital Triage)

Closest hospital: _____



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Introduction

Women who have signs of labour before 34 weeks (called preterm labour) need special care during their pregnancy.

Your doctor has determined it is safe for you to get this care at home through our **Antepartum Care at Home Program (ACAHP)**.

One of our Program nurses contacts you every day and visits you in your home. You and your family are actively involved in your care.

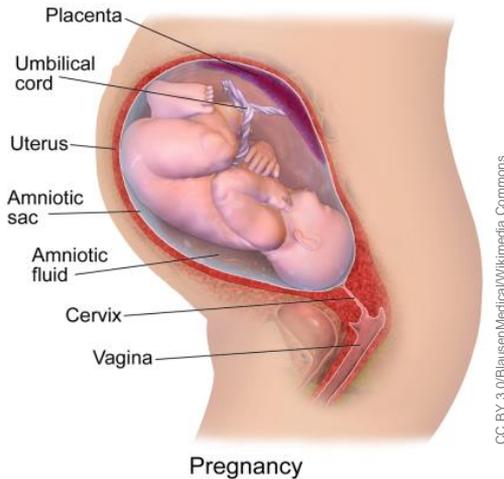
Our aim is to help keep you and your baby safe, healthy, and comfortable in your own home while you progress through your pregnancy.

This booklet gives you information about preterm labour. We outline the tests and treatments you can expect. We also describe what you and your family can do to care for you and your unborn baby.

Tip: Use the space at the back to write down any questions you have. We will review this information with you and answer any of your questions.

About Preterm Labour

Preterm (or premature) labour when labour begins 3 or more weeks before the baby is due. Women who have preterm labour before the 34th week need extra care. The regular contractions of the uterus cause the cervix to shorten and/or open earlier than expected. If this happens, the baby could be born too early (a premature baby).



Effect on Your Baby

Babies who are born too early (premature) can have a lower birth weight and lungs that have not fully developed.

Premature babies can have more problems with breathing, eating, and keeping warm.

Some babies need medical care in a special nursery such as the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).

Tests and Treatments

You can expect to have certain tests and therapies while being cared for in the Program (ACAHP).

Activity and Rest Therapy

When resting during the day or going to bed at night, lie on your side. This is the best position to make sure there is good blood flow to your baby.

We know that bedrest is not the best thing for you or your body, so we do not advise it. It can decrease your muscle strength and tone, slow down your digestion, cause constipation, and increase the chances of having blood clots. Also, bedrest can be hard on your whole family.

You might notice more contractions when you have increased activity. To help us compare how your activities affect your contractions, we ask you to record both your hours of rest and your activities through the day.

Do you have more contractions when doing these activities?

- When up walking?
- When bending over?
- When standing for long periods?

Go slow. Try not to do any of the activities that increase your contractions.

Some women wonder about sexual intercourse. Please talk with your doctor about what is right for you.

Fetal Heart Rate Counting

Unborn babies can give messages about their health through their heart rate. We take a few minutes to count your baby's heart rate. You can hear your baby's heartbeat when we press a device called a 'doptone' against your abdomen (belly). We check your baby's heartbeat each time we visit by either using the doptone or by non-stress test.

Non-Stress Test

If we are concerned with your baby's heart rate, we do what is called a 'non-stress test'. To do this test, we use a machine called a fetal monitor. It records your baby's heartbeat and movements as well as your contractions. This test can take between 20 to 80 minutes, depending on how awake your baby is at the time.



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Non-Stress Test

Ultrasound Scans

An ultrasound scan shows your baby's position and allows us to measure:

- the length of your cervix (up to 32 weeks)
- your baby's growth
- the amount of fluid around your baby

Your doctor decides how often you need an ultrasound scan.



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Ultrasound

Home Visits

A nurse from the Program (ACAHP) visits you at home 2 times a week and contacts you by telephone each day. Together with your doctor and nurse, you make a visiting schedule.

At each visit, your nurse:

- feels your abdomen (belly) for contractions or for any tenderness, and your baby's position
- listens to your baby's heart rate
- checks you for signs of early labour
- asks you about your bowel activity
- looks at your **Mom's Record**

During visits, you and your nurse talk about how you are managing at home and how you are caring for yourself.

A good way to prepare for your visits is to write down any questions or concerns you have and want to remember to ask your nurse. You can use the 'Notes' section to write down your questions.

*Remember to bring your **Mom's Record** with you to your doctor's appointment and any hospital visits.

Care at Home

You play a large role in your care, keeping watch over your own health and the health of your baby.

Each day, you complete your **Mom's Record** with:

- how long you rest at night and 3 times in the day
- the number of contractions checked 2 times a day
- the amount of vaginal discharge checked 4 times a day
- your baby's movements counted 1 time each day (If you are less than 26 weeks, you don't need to count but take some time once a day to see how your baby is moving)

Your nurse teaches you how to do each of these checks.

Check for signs of preterm labour

Signs of preterm labour:

- contractions every 10 minutes or less, lasting more than 1 hour (see 'Count contractions', page 10)
- menstrual-like cramps felt in the low abdomen, either constant or comes and goes
- low, dull backache felt below your waistline, either constant or comes and goes
- pressure in the pelvis that feels like the baby is pushing down
- bowel cramps with or without diarrhea
- increase or change in vaginal discharge
 - colour now pink (blood-tinged), red (fresh blood), or brown (old blood)
 - amount increased from what you usually have
- a sudden gush of fluid from your vagina (means your water has broken also called ruptured membranes)

If you have any signs of preterm labour, follow the instructions on page 15 on 'When to get help'.

Count contractions

It is often hard to recognize early or premature labour. Knowing this, we want to make sure you know how to feel your abdomen for uterine contractions.

How to feel for contractions:

1. While resting, place your finger tips on the top of your uterus. If your uterus is contracting, you will actually feel your abdomen get tight or hard, and then feel it relax or soften when the contraction is over.
2. Keep your hands on your abdomen for 1 hour.
3. Count the number of contractions.
4. Write down the total number counted in 1 hour on your **Mom's Record**.

To tell how often the contractions are coming, note the time 1 contraction starts and the time the next one starts.

If you notice any signs of premature labour, do any or all of the following **comfort measures**:

- Empty your bladder.
- Empty your bowels.
- Drink a glass of water.
- Take a relaxing bath or shower.

Tip

Keep from getting constipated:

- Eat food high in fibre such as whole grains, vegetables, and fruit.
- Drink at least 6 to 8 glasses (1.2 to 2 litres) of water a day.

Count your baby's movements

You know your baby and you know his or her normal moving pattern. We have learned that when some babies do not feel well, they move less often. This is usually a change from normal and women can sense their baby is moving less often. Counting your baby's movements helps us check in on how your baby is feeling each day.

When counting baby's movements:

- Write down the time you start counting movements.
- Count until you feel 6 episodes of activity.
- Write down the time you stop counting.

We are looking for more than 6 episodes of activity in 2 hours. If your baby moves less than 6 times, follow the instructions on page 15 on 'When to get help'.



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Counting movements

Take care of yourself

Take time each day to check in with yourself on your **emotional health**.

You will experience the usual range of emotions and changes in pregnancy. With preterm labour, it is natural to also feel bored, frustrated, guilty, or worried.

Please share your concerns with your nurse and doctor.

When to Get Help

Call the Antepartum Care at Home Program right away if:

- 1 or more signs of preterm labour:
- less than 6 episodes of your baby moving in 2 hours

If we do not call you back within 15 minutes, call the hospital where you plan to deliver your baby.

Call the Maternity Unit at your delivery hospital then go to the hospital right away if you have:

- red coloured spotting (blood) from your vagina
- a trickle or gush of clear or light yellow fluid (water breaks)

Call 9-1-1 for an ambulance if you have:

- a large amount of bright red blood from your vagina
- pressure in your pelvic that feels like the baby is pushing down

My delivery hospital: _____

Birthing Unit/
Maternity Unit phone number: _____