

Warning Signs of Preterm Labor

It may be possible to prevent a premature birth by knowing the warning signs of premature labor and by seeking care early if these signs occur. Warning signs and symptoms for premature labor include:

- Uterine contractions that happen six or more times in an hour, with or without any other warning signs.
- Menstrual-like cramps felt in the lower abdomen that may come and go or be constant.
- Low dull backache felt below the waistline that may come and go or be constant.
- Pelvic pressure that feels like your baby is pushing down. This pressure comes and goes.
- Abdominal cramping with or without diarrhea.
- Increase or change in vaginal discharge such as change into a mucous, watery, or bloody discharge.

How to Tell What's Normal

It is normal to have some uterine contractions throughout the day. They often occur when you change positions, such as from sitting to lying down. **It is not normal to have frequent uterine contractions, such as six or more in one hour.** Frequent uterine contractions or tightening's may cause your cervix to begin to open.

Since the onset of premature labor is very subtle and often hard to recognize, it is important to know how to feel your abdomen for uterine contractions. You can feel for contractions in this way:

- While lying down, place your fingertips on the top of your uterus
- A contraction is a periodic tightening or hardening of your uterus. If your uterus is contracting, you will feel your abdomen get tight or hard, and then feel it relax or soften when the contraction is over.

What To Do If You Think You Are Having Preterm Labor

1. Lie down on your left side and use a pillow on your back for support.
 - Sometimes lying down for an hour may slow down or stop the signs and symptoms.
 - Do not lie flat on your back because lying flat may cause the contractions to occur more often.
 - Hydrate yourself by drinking several large glasses of water. Sometime being dehydrated can cause contractions.
2. Monitor yourself for one hour
 - To tell how often your contractions are coming, check the minutes from the beginning of one contraction to the beginning of the next one.

Call us at (208) 746-1383 Ext. 6505 or after hours, the hospital at (208) 799-5431 if you are feeling any of these symptoms:

- You have six or more contractions in 1 hour
- You have spotting or leaking of fluid from your vagina

For more information go to:

<https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/preterm-labor-and-birth>