

Premature birth



A premature birth occurs when a baby is born before completing 37 weeks of gestation, whereas a typical pregnancy lasts around 40 weeks. Premature babies are at higher risk of experiencing severe health complications, both in the short and long term, because their organs have not yet reached full development at the time of birth.

Problems a premature baby may face in the short term

Respiratory: Your lungs are immature, so you'll have difficulty breathing on your own.

Cardiovascular: Your veins, valves, and arteries are still too narrow, preventing blood from flowing evenly throughout your body; your blood pressure and heartbeat will be low.

Cerebral: Lack of adequate oxygenation and changes in blood pressure can cause bleeding to occur in the brain. They may also have blood problems such as anemia and jaundice (yellowing eyes and skin).

Gastrointestinal: Your intestines may still be immature or outside the abdominal wall, which can lead to multiple complications, including difficulty feeding and gaining weight.

Immunology: their defense system against viruses and bacteria is not yet strong enough, so an infection in the blood (septicemia) could occur.

Body temperature: Under their skin they don't yet have enough fat, which causes difficulty controlling temperature and keeping warm.

Care for a premature baby in the hospital

The hospital's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) will closely watch and treat any problems the



newborn has. The baby must remain in the neonatal unit until his or her system and organs can function without assistance.

During the hospital stay, your baby will receive regular checkups, vaccinations, and other treatments to protect his or her health. While this is happening, choose a pediatrician and schedule visits. Your baby may need care with specialist doctors.

The following signs indicate that your baby is ready to go home:

- You can breathe without help.
- He has a stable body temperature.
- You can breastfeed or bottle-feed.
- Gain weight in a healthy way.
- You don't have any major health problems.

Recommendations:

- **Every time you go to visit your baby**, you should wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, wear a mask, and follow any protective measures required by the hospital.
- **Review your health plan's** benefit coverage.
- **Learn CPR (First Aid)** for Infants

Care for a premature baby at home

- Keep the house clean to prevent infection.
- For the first few weeks, limit outings. Go out only for pediatrician visits or other medical follow-ups.
- Limit home visits; everyone should wash their hands before touching the baby.
- Feed the baby, following the pediatrician's instructions. You may exclusively breastfeed your child for at least the first six (6) months of life. If this is not possible, feed your child with iron-fortified formula.
- At bedtime, always lay your baby on his or her back on a firm surface. To avoid an accident, remove toys and loose bedding from the crib.
- During the hospital stay, your baby will receive regular checkups, vaccinations, and other treatments to protect his or her health. While this is happening, choose a pediatrician and schedule the visits. Your baby may need care with specialists doctors.



Other problems a premature baby may face in the long term

- Problems with motor development, such as holding the head, crawling, and walking.
- Difficulties in learning, comprehension, and attention.
- Vision problems.
- Aggressive behavior, anxiety, or trouble relating to others.
- Vision and hearing problems.
- Cerebral palsy.

Social and Emotional Aspect

For tips, tools, and resources on how you and your family can cope with the emotional and physical concerns that arise during and after medical treatment, please visit your primary care physician or call the following phone lines:

Medical Advice Line

1-844-347-7801

TTY/TDD 1-844-347-7804

APS Healthcare 787-641-9133

References:

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es-es/diseases-conditions/premature-birth/symptoms-causes/syc-20376730>

https://www.merckmanuals.com/es-us/hogar/salud-infantil/problemas-generales-del-reci%C3%A9n-nacido/reci%C3%A9n-nacidos-prematuros#Complicaciones_v36970659_es

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