

After a Premature Birth

What you need to know after having a premature birth



Things to do **EVERY DAY** for healthy women and babies:

Exercise – 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week

Vitamin – 400 micrograms (mcg) of Folic Acid per day

Educate yourself about medicines and chemicals that can cause birth defects

Reproductive life planning – set your personal goals for birth control and future children

Yearly doctor visits to discuss physical and mental wellness

Diet – Vegetables, fruits, and whole grains daily

Avoid tobacco, drugs, and alcohol

Your partner, friends, and family should be sources of support

Content from everywomancalifornia.org with permission from the Preconception Health Council of California.



What can you do now to help your health?

- If you have any medical problems, like diabetes or high blood pressure, see your health care provider to make sure they are under control.
- Reach a healthy weight. Women who are underweight or overweight are at increased risk for a premature birth compared to women at a healthy weight.
- Do not smoke or take any illegal drugs. If you do, stop.
- Make sure all of your vaccines are up to date, especially the seasonal flu vaccine.

Breastfeeding

Breastmilk provides many health benefits for all babies, especially babies that are born premature or are sick. If your baby is in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), use the combination of breastmilk and formula, bottle-feeding and nursing that works best for you and your baby. Talk to your baby's health care team to help figure out a plan to best feed your baby.

What can you do to help prevent a premature birth in your next pregnancy

- Wait at least 2 years between pregnancies to try to become pregnant; women who wait less than 1 year to get pregnant again are more likely to have a premature birth. Talk to your health care provider about your options for a reliable form of contraception.
- Take prenatal vitamins and at least 400 mcg per day of folic acid for at least one year before trying to become pregnant. Taking vitamins and folic acid can help prevent certain birth defects of the brain and spinal cord.
- Talk with your provider about what you can do before and during your next pregnancy to lower your chance of having a premature birth, like taking the hormone medication progesterone while pregnant.
- Plan to start prenatal care early in your next pregnancy. Seeing your health care provider during the first 2-3 months of your next pregnancy will help your provider detect any problems and treat them.
- Make sure you know the signs of preterm labor and know what to do if you have them.

Remember your ABCs:

folic  cid  reastfeeding  ontraception

For more information, go to:

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists:
acog.org/publications/faq/faq087.cfm

American Pregnancy Association:

americanpregnancy.org/labornbirth/complicationspremature.htm

Every Woman California: everywomancalifornia.org

March of Dimes: marchofdimes.com/baby/premature.html