

Health Unit Media Release



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Learn to **RECOGNIZE** and **RESPOND** to Preterm Labour

“I knew something wasn’t right, but it was way too early for me to be in labour. I waited for two days, unsure of what was happening, and afraid to go to the hospital. I delivered my baby at 28 weeks. I wish I had known better,” says a new mom in Smiths Falls. Every year about 8% of babies, or around 120, are born preterm in Leeds, Grenville and Lanark. These are babies born more than two weeks early.

Preterm and low birth weight babies have more health problems in the newborn period. Some of these babies will have life long disabilities. Some preterm babies are very small. Some may not be strong enough to live.

Families with a preterm baby must cope with emotional pain and life challenges. They will have added financial costs. Preterm babies who survive with a disability will need many community resources to help them throughout their life. During his/her lifetime, it is estimated that each preterm low birth weight baby will use about \$676,800 (1995 Canadian dollars) in health care.

Some risk factors, before or during pregnancy, may result in a preterm birth. These risk factors include: cigarette smoking, infections, high stress, cocaine use, poor eating habits and prolonged standing on the job (more than 3 hours).

One of the best ways to reduce the problems that come with a preterm birth is for families to recognize the signs and symptoms of preterm labour and act quickly. This gives the medical team time to give the mother medications, which make a big difference to the health of the baby.

Signs and symptoms of preterm labour:

- **Bad cramps or stomach pains that don’t go away**
- **Bleeding, trickle or gush of fluid from the vagina**
- **Lower back pain/pressure, or a change in lower backache**
- **A feeling that the baby is pushing down**
- **Contractions, or change in the strength or number of them**
- **An increase in the amount of vaginal discharge**
- **SOME WOMEN MAY JUST FEEL THAT ‘SOMETHING IS NOT RIGHT’**

If any of these symptoms are present, **GO TO THE HOSPITAL RIGHT AWAY!**

For more information on preterm labour and how to reduce the chance of preterm labour call the HealthAction line at 1-800-660-5853 (345-5685) or visit our website at www.healthunit.org.

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