

Health Unit Media Release

For immediate release: October 23, 2007



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

Every year about 8% of babies, or around 120, are born preterm in Leeds, Grenville and Lanark. These are babies born before 37 weeks of pregnancy.

Preterm and low birth weight babies can 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 distress and life challenges. They may have additional unplanned expenses. Preterm babies who survive with a disability will need many community resources to help them to have the best quality of life.

Reducing some risk factors for preterm birth before or during pregnancy can mean fewer preterm babies. These risk factors include: cigarette smoking, infections, high stress, cocaine use, poor nutrition and standing on the job for long periods (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 know what to do. 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 FEEL THAT 'SOMETHING JUST IS NOT RIGHT'

If any of these symptoms are present: **GO 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 or visit our website at www.healthunit.org.

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