What you need to know about premature delivery and future pregnancies

How you can reduce your risk of a premature delivery

What is a premature delivery?
A premature delivery is a delivery that occurs before 37 weeks of pregnancy.

Why was my baby born prematurely?
A Even if you do everything right, you can still have a baby that is born too early. One out of every 8 babies in the United States is born prematurely. There are certain risk factors that can increase a woman’s chances of having a baby born early. Talk to your doctor, midwife or nurse about your risk factors before becoming pregnant again.

Will my future babies be born prematurely?
A Because your baby was born prematurely, you may be at a higher risk of delivering early again in your next pregnancy.

Will I need special care during my next pregnancy?
A Your doctor, midwife or nurse may recommend:
• You see a Maternal Fetal Medicine doctor. This type of doctor specializes in high-risk pregnancies.
• More frequent office visits, ultrasounds and monitoring of the baby during your pregnancy.
• Progesterone treatments. Progesterone is a hormone made by women's bodies that increases during pregnancy. Progesterone treatments can help reduce the chance of premature delivery by as much as 35 to 45%.

How can I reduce my chances of another premature delivery?
A Here are some tips to help you prevent premature delivery:
• One of the most important things you can do is to start prenatal care as soon as possible. Make an appointment to see a doctor, midwife or nurse when you become pregnant.
• Get treated for any chronic health conditions like diabetes, hypertension and thyroid problems.
• Exercise regularly and try to stay at a healthy weight.
• Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet.
• Avoid alcohol, drugs and tobacco.
• Protect yourself from infections by practicing safe sex.
• Try to reduce your stress level as much as possible.
• Wait 18-24 months before becoming pregnant again.
• Talk to a health care professional about starting prenatal vitamins if you are trying to get pregnant.

Information provided courtesy of The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center.

OBBO is a partner in CelebrateOne, a community-wide initiative to reduce infant mortality and help more babies celebrate their first birthdays. For more information and resources, visit www.celebrateone.info and www.ohiobetterbirthoutcomes.org.

Information provided courtesy of The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center.