

# Preterm Labor Signs & Symptoms

## Being keenly aware of your body

Prematurity is the single most important problem facing multiple births, occurring ten times more often with multiples than with a singleton. Although very premature babies are surviving now more than ever before, it is not without a high emotional, physical and financial price!

This makes learning and knowing the signs and symptoms of preterm labor very important for moms expecting multiples. You must be keenly aware of your body to be aware of the subtle changes that can take place, signaling the onset of preterm labor. The following is a list of the signs and symptoms of preterm labor. You will find these to be very vague and may even feel like you experience these frequently as a part of your pregnancy.

- **Dull low backache**
- **Menstrual-like cramps**
- **Pelvic Pressure** -  
this feels like when you stand up, your babies are going to fall right out. You will feel like you need to hold up your abdomen.
- **Abdominal cramping with or without diarrhea**
- **Increase or change in vaginal discharge** -  
This is a change from what you normally have been experiencing in your pregnancy
- **Possible contractions**
- **"Feeling that everything is not quite right"** -  
This is the one I hear most often from moms. Pay attention to your intuition, or gut feeling!

As you can see, the seven warning signs are pretty gray, not a clear black and white picture. Contractions on average usually start for twins around 24 weeks, for triplets around 21 weeks. It is a good idea for moms carrying multiples to start feeling for uterine contractions around the 21st week, earlier for triplets, possibly 18 or 19 weeks.

Lay down twice a day for one hour, usually in the morning and evening on your side with both of your hands on either side of your naval (belly button). You do not want to press firmly, just lay your whole hand on your abdomen and feel for any tightening. If just one side is hard and the other is soft, then your feeling someone's head or butt pushing up at you. Just the babies' way of saying "hello". Both sides will be hard, meaning not very indentable. It's like the difference between your nose (not contracted) and your forehead (contracted) if this helps you understand better. If you are having 4 or more contractions in an hour, the first thing you need to do is get 2 (10-12 oz.) glasses of water or juice. Drink them as quickly as possible, and lay back down on your side. It will usually take about 20-25 minutes for the water to be absorbed into your system, so don't panic. If this does not slow the contractions, get another 10-12 oz. glass of water and fill up your bathtub with warm water, and soak while continuing to drink your water. This will help relax you, and your uterus. If after 20 minutes of soaking in your bathtub the contractions do not lessen, call your doctor, and you will probably go to the hospital for monitoring and possibly a tocolytic drug, (a drug to stop uterine contractions).

We can't always prevent preterm labor, but hopefully with good nutrition and an awareness of your body, we can prevent it from progressing too far. Good luck with baby-building!!