



### **Preterm Labor**

Preterm labor is the start of labor between 20 and 36 weeks of pregnancy and is defined as having contractions with cervical changes. Most babies are born between 37 and 42 weeks. Preterm labor can be caused by a problem with the baby, the mother, or both and often the cause is unknown. As you enter the third trimester you may notice your body accommodating to the baby's growth. With this you may experience contractions known as Braxton Hicks Contractions or False Labor. The difference between these contractions and preterm labor is that Braxton Hicks Contractions will not dilate your cervix. The only way to evaluate the difference is to be seen by your Healthcare provider. This is why it is important to call if you begin to feel any of the following warning signs:

- **Contractions**  
Menstrual like cramps or gas pains that come and go or are continuous. Tightening or balling up in your abdomen more than (5) five times in an hour. These may or may not be painful.
- **Low Back Ache**  
A dull ache in your lower back that tends to radiate to the sides and front of your abdomen and is NOT relieved by changing your position or a warm bath.
- **Vaginal Discharge**  
Increase in vaginal drainage that becomes pink/brown or watery.  
Sudden release of fluid from the vagina  
You have vaginal bleeding
- **Signs of Preeclampsia**  
Sudden swelling of face, hands, or feet  
New vision problems (such as dimness, blurriness or seeing spots)  
A severe headache
- **Decreased Fetal Movement**  
You notice the baby has stopped moving or is moving much less than normal.
- **Fever**  
You have a fever.
- ***A GENERAL FEELING THAT SOMETHING IS NOT RIGHT!***

#### **Call for Emergency Care if:**

- You have passed out (lost consciousness)
- You have a seizure.
- You have severe vaginal bleeding.
- You have fluid gushing from your vagina, and you know or think the umbilical cord is bulging into your vagina. If this happens immediately get down on your knees so your rear end is higher than your head. This will decrease pressure on the cord until help arrives.