

Outstanding Care,
Compassionate People,
Healthier Communities



Sherwood Forest Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Signs and symptoms of preterm labour

Information for patients



**Maternity
Services**

With you every step of the way

Signs and symptoms of preterm labour

This leaflet has been produced for all women and birthing people that intend to birth at Sherwood Forest Hospitals.

The staff at King’s Mill Maternity Unit are committed to provide the best care for you and your baby.

Preterm birth is defined as any birth less than 37 weeks, affecting around 8% of births in England and Wales:

- Extremely preterm – less than 28+0 weeks
- Very preterm - 28+0 to 31+6 weeks
- Moderate preterm - 32+0 to 36+6 weeks.

We know that 8 out of 100 women and birthing people will face early labour (preterm) before they reach 37 weeks.



We also know that very preterm babies between 22 and 28 weeks are less common - 1 out of 100 births.



This information leaflet has been produced to help you understand what conditions may increase your risk of preterm labour

We know that facing preterm labour less than or equal to 37 weeks is a frightening and uncertain time for any woman / birthing person and the family. We hope you can use this information to guide you to the best place in the event of any worrying signs and symptoms that you may be experiencing.

We want to express the importance of calling your birth choice hospital at the first instance with any worries or concerns so that a health professional can assess these and assist you in the best way possible.

Birth in the right place

We also know that in some circumstances that a preterm infant is better birthed in one of our tertiary (specialised care) units to give them the best chance of survival.

Our local tertiary unit is Nottingham University Hospitals Trust. However, we may need to transfer you to a tertiary unit further away.

We never want you to feel you are calling us and wasting our time. We want you to call immediately with **ANY** worry or concern.

Risk factors

Most causes of preterm labour less than 37 weeks are unknown and may be due to several factors.

You may be increased risk of preterm labour if you have had:

- A history of spontaneous preterm labour.
- Preterm, prelabour rupture of the membranes.
- Previous spontaneous rupture of the membranes or labour before 34 weeks.
- Previous late miscarriage between 16 and 24 weeks.
- Vaginal bleeding after 14 weeks.
- A variant in the shape of your uterus.
- Multiple pregnancy, twins/ triplets/quads etc.
- Increased fluid around the baby (polyhydramnios).
- Intrauterine adhesions (Asherman's syndrome).
- Surgery to the cervix (tachelectomy).
- An IVF pregnancy.
- One LLETZ procedure.
- One cone biopsy.
- An infection.
- If you are a smoker.

Signs to alert you to seek further advice and guidance



What are the signs of premature labour?

If you have any of the following symptoms, call the hospital or midwife straight away, because you could be in labour:

- **Regular contractions or tightenings.**
- **Period-type pains or pressure in your vaginal area.**
- **A *show* - when the plug of mucus that has sealed the cervix during pregnancy comes away and out of the vagina.**
- **A gush or trickle of fluid from your vagina - this could be your waters breaking.**
- **Backache.**

We know that facing preterm labour less than or equal to 37 weeks is a frightening and uncertain time for any woman / birthing person and the family. We hope you can use this information to guide you to the best place in the event of any worrying signs and symptoms that you may be experiencing.

We want to express the importance of calling your birth choice hospital at the first instance with any worries or concerns so that a health professional can assess these and assist you in the best way possible.

Tell your midwife or hospital staff immediately if:

- **You are bleeding.**
- **Your baby is moving less than usual.**

We want you to phone if you have concerns any time day or night, if you have a risk or not. Anyone can have a preterm labour or other concern.

Please telephone Triage (open 24 hours a day) – **01623 676170.**

What to expect if you are admitted for suspected preterm less than or equal to 37 weeks labour

You will be asked to attend the birthing unit to have a full assessment.

This will include:

- A full assessment of your wellbeing, including maternal observations i.e., blood pressure, heart rate, temperature, respirations, saturation levels, urine dip (urinalysis).
- A full and detailed history of events.
- An assessment of fetal wellbeing. This could either be done depending on weeks by listening to baby with a handheld device (doppler) or a cardiotocography (CTG) depending on gestation less than or equal to 26 weeks.
- Cervical length scan.
- Vaginal examination.
- Partus test.
- If we suspect, you may be in early labour, our doctors will give you all the information and advice you need to allow you to make an informed decision about your plan of care, respecting your wishes along the way.



In any event you can contact our maternity services on:

- Triage (open 24 hours a day) - **01623 676170**

option 1 +20 weeks pregnant

option 2 Less than 20 weeks pregnant

option 3 General non urgent matters

Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions

Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on **01623 672222** or email **sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net**.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you. External websites may be referred to in specific cases.

Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them. If you require a full list of references (if relevant) for this leaflet, please email sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

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