

## Preterm Labour and Screening A Guide for Pregnant Women



This brochure provide information about Preterm Labour and Screening. It is design to respond to questions most frequently asked by patients.



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## **Preterm Labour and Screening**

### **What is Preterm Labour?**


Labour that occurs before 37 weeks of gestation is known as "Preterm Labour". Uterine contractions (tightening of the womb) causes the cervix (mouth of the womb) to open earlier than normal. This can result in premature birth of the baby.


### **Why Should I Learn about Preterm Labour?**

- No one can tell who will have preterm labour. It can happen to any pregnant woman.
- Preterm labour can lead to a premature birth, and babies born more than three weeks before their due date (i.e. 37 weeks of pregnancy) can have serious problems in breathing, feeding and keeping warm including the risk of infection and Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) admission.
- The earlier these babies are born, the more severe these complications are.
- If you know what to look for, you will be able to tell if preterm labour is happening to you. Then you can get help to stop it and can prevent your baby from being born too early.

### **Can This Happen to Me?**

A preterm delivery can happen to any woman. It can even happen to perfectly healthy women. However, if you have one of the following risk factors, then the risk of preterm delivery is increased:

- Preterm labour or premature birth in previous pregnancies;
  - Multiple gestation (twin, triplets etc);
  - History of one or more second trimester miscarriages or induced abortions (planned ending of a pregnancy);
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- If you have any uterine or cervical abnormalities;
  - If you have had abdominal surgery during this pregnancy;
  - If you suffer from a serious infection while pregnant including vaginal infections like bacterial vaginosis;
  - Bleeding during second or third trimester of pregnancy.

### **What Can I Do to Prevent Preterm Delivery?**

Proper antenatal checkups and healthy diet can prevent the preterm delivery. Transvaginal ultrasound for cervical length can help us to screen out women carrying a risk of preterm labour.

This service is offered from 12 weeks onwards at four weeks intervals.

### **How Can I Have This Ultrasound?**

- The ultrasound is booked after you have been seen by one of the consultants at Consulting Clinic # 4.
- After counseling, you will be given the date and time for ultrasound. These scans are performed in Feto-Maternal unit of Obstetrics And Gynaecology;
- A full bladder is not required.
- Once you reach, get registered, you will be taken to scan room; the ultrasound is explained to you and you will be asked to sign a consent form.
- The ultrasound is performed by transvaginal route.

### **Is the Procedure Safe?**

Apart from mild discomfort to you, this ultrasound does not harm the baby.



## When Will I Find Out the Result?

In most cases, the result will be communicated to you on the same day or the following day.


## What are the Warning Signs Of Preterm Labour?

- Uterine contractions which happen every 10 minutes or more often.
- Menstrual-like cramps in lower abdomen. Sporadic or constant.
- Low dull backache felt below the waistline. Sporadic or constant.
- Pelvic pressure that feels as though the baby is pushing down. Pressure feels Sporadically.
- Abdominal cramps, with or without diarrhoea
- Vaginal discharge may suddenly increase in amount, or become sticky, watery, or slightly blood stained.

## When Should I Call?

Call right away if you have any of the following:

- Any fluid from your vagina;
- Any blood from your vagina;
- A sudden increase in vaginal discharge;
- Menstrual like cramps;

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- Low dull backache;
  - Pelvic pressure;
  - Abdominal cramps;
  - Changes in Vaginal discharge changes.

### **Should I Do Anything If I Have Preterm Labour Signs?**

When any muscle in your body “contracts”, it becomes tight or hard to the touch. When your uterus – which is a muscle, contracts, you will feel it getting tighter or harder. When the contraction stops, it becomes soft.

It is not normal to have frequent uterine contractions before your baby is due. If you feel more than five contractions in an hour, your uterus is contracting too much.

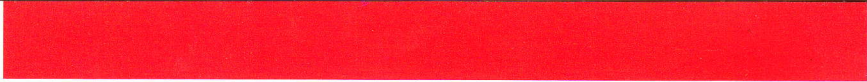
Lie down and check for contractions. If you have five or more in one hour, or if the warning signs do not go away in one hour, come to the labour room, if your pregnancy is more than or equal to 24 weeks. If it is less than that, then you have to come to emergency room.

### **If I Need To Call, What Should I Say?**

- Give your name and Medical Record Number (written on your white plastic card).
- Tell them about the expected date of delivery.
- Tell them the warning signs you are having.

### **What Will Happen If I To Go To The Hospital?**

- A monitor will be placed on your abdomen to check for uterine contractions and your cervix will be checked to see if it is opening.

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- If you are in Preterm Labour, you may receive medication to stop your labour.
  - If you are not in preterm labour, you will be able to go home.

**For more information, please contact**

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Aga Khan University Hospital  
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Phone : 4930051, Ext : 1033-34-36

Labour Room  
Aga Khan University Hospital  
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Phone : 4930051, Ext : 4390-91