

Attention Moms-To-Be!



Advances In Prenatal Care Help Prevent Premature Birth



Mothers-to-be and their doctors can take measures now to reduce the risk of having a premature baby.

(NAPSA)—Moms-to-be have enough to worry about preparing for their new arrival without worrying about whether their baby is going to be born too soon. But premature birth is something that all pregnant women need to be aware of because it can happen to anyone.

A premature baby is born every minute in the United States. “Preemies” often face long hospitalizations and may suffer developmental delays or lifelong disabilities. Prematurity is also the No. 1 cause of infant death. It’s a difficult puzzle to solve, but researchers are finally putting some of the pieces together.

Two critical pieces are the cervix, which is the lower part of the uterus, and progesterone, a naturally occurring hormone.

During pregnancy, the cervix naturally shortens (effaces) and opens (dilates) as delivery nears. Sometimes the cervix starts shortening too soon, as early as the second trimester. Although this only happens to about 10 percent of pregnant women, they are six times more likely to have a premature birth.

Measuring cervical length mid-pregnancy will reassure women with a normal cervix. For those who learn their cervix is shortening, a cervical length measurement is the key to getting preventive treatment.

“If a pregnant woman’s cervix shortens too soon, she and her baby are at high risk of an early delivery

that may have tragic consequences,” said Jason K. Baxter, M.D., MSCP, FACOG, a high-risk pregnancy physician and an author of ground-breaking research on progesterone and prematurity prevention. “Treatment with vaginal progesterone gel started mid-pregnancy for women with a short cervix helps reduce premature birth so that more moms can have healthy babies.”

Experts say that cervical length measurements are critical for all pregnant women. There are two ways to measure cervical length reliably: transvaginal ultrasound and a new device called CerviLenz.

Transvaginal ultrasound uses a probe that is inserted into the vagina to create a digital image of the cervix. This procedure usually requires an extra prenatal appointment as there is a need for high-tech equipment and specially trained examiners.

CerviLenz is a disposable device used with a speculum. With CerviLenz, it’s easy for obstetricians and midwives to measure cervical length during regular prenatal visits.

Expectant mothers should speak with their health care providers about having their cervical length measured at least twice during the second trimester of their pregnancy to find out if they are at high risk of premature birth and need treatment. Visit www.measure2besure.com for more information.