

Mothers-To-Be

The New Terms Every Mom-to-Be Needs To Know

(NAPSA)—The National Institutes of Health (NIH) and leading medical groups have important news for parents-to-be. A pregnancy is not “full term” until 39 weeks. Research shows that babies do best when they are born at 39 or 40 weeks.

New Definitions

By definition, a baby born between 37 weeks and 42 weeks is considered “term.” However, because of the health risks to babies born before 39 weeks, NIH supports new definitions for delivery between 37 and 42 weeks.

- Early term: Babies born at 37 weeks and 38 weeks
- Full term: Babies born in weeks 39 and 40
- Late term: Babies born in week 41
- Post term: Babies born at 42 weeks and later

Why This Matters

The last few weeks of pregnancy make a difference for the baby’s health. Babies born before 39 weeks are more likely to spend time in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) and have problems with breathing, feeding, and controlling their temperature. They may also be at higher risk for learning problems and difficulties with vision and hearing.

What This Means For You

Waiting to deliver until at least 39 weeks, in a healthy pregnancy, gives your baby the time he or she needs to grow. During weeks 37 and 38, the brain forms connec-



Doctors now say a pregnancy is not considered full term until at least 39 weeks. Waiting to deliver until then gives the baby the best chance for a healthy start in life.

tions that will be important for coordination, movement, and learning. There is also important lung, liver and brain development in the last few weeks of pregnancy.

Where To Learn More

Discuss the new full-term pregnancy definition with your health care provider. You can also learn more from the experts at the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) at <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/KnowYourTerms> and watch a video at <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/wait39weeks>.