

# BUMP AND BEYOND

*Cobb & Douglas Public Health Pregnancy Newsletter*



## What is preterm labor?

Even if you do everything right during pregnancy, you can still have preterm labor and a premature birth. Preterm labor starts before 37 weeks of pregnancy. If you have any of these signs or symptoms before your 37th week of pregnancy, you may be experiencing preterm labor:

- Change in your vaginal discharge (watery, mucus or bloody) or more vaginal discharge than usual
- Pressure in your pelvis or lower belly, like your baby is pushing down
- Constant low, dull backache
- Belly cramps with or without diarrhea
- Regular or frequent contractions that make your belly tighten like a fist. The contractions may or may not be painful.
- Your water breaks

If you have even one sign or symptom of preterm labor, call your health care provider right away. When you see your provider, they may do a pelvic exam or a transvaginal ultrasound to see if your cervix has started to become thinner and open for labor. If you're having contractions, your provider will monitor them to see how strong and far apart they are. You may also have other tests done to see if you really are in labor. If you're having preterm labor, your provider may give you treatment to help stop it or to help improve your baby's health before birth. Talk with your provider about which treatments may be right for you.

PREMATURITY  
AWARENESS ISSUE

PRETERM LABOR  
CARING FOR A PRETERM  
INFANT

SELF-CARE WHEN BABY  
IS IN THE NICU

STAFF HIGHLIGHT: NEW  
MANAGER!

UPCOMING CLASSES  
AND EVENTS





## Self-care when baby is in the NICU

Having a child in the NICU is stressful. Here are some ways you can cope with this stress.

**Build a support system:** It is important for you to find people who can relate to this unique experience that you are going through. Ask your hospital to see if they have a NICU support group for parents. If not, there are many online organizations that offer virtual groups.

**Get sleep and exercise:** Strive for 6-8 hours of sleep at night. It's important to rest, so you can recover as well. Exercise, if cleared by your provider, helps with stress relief and is important for your overall health. Walking, especially outdoors, is great during this time.

**Eat healthy foods:** Eating a well-balanced diet high in lean proteins, veggies, and fruit is important.

**Accept help:** If people offer to help, take them up on the offer. Ask people to do laundry, take you to the hospital, make meals, or even care for older siblings while you focus on caring for yourself and your new child.

**Journaling:** This helps to reduce stress, improve immune function, sharpen your memory, boost your mood, and strengthen your overall emotional health.

**Therapy:** If you are feeling overwhelmed, you may want to seek professional help. A therapist can help you on your journey to wellness. If you are interested in starting therapy, please give us a call at 770-514-2818, and we can help you get set up with a provider.

**Remember:** You can't take care of someone else if you don't care for yourself first.

## Premature infant needs

A premature baby is born before 37 weeks of pregnancy. Each year, about 1 in 10 babies in the United States is born prematurely. Premature babies may have more health problems and need to stay in the hospital longer than babies born later. Thanks to advances in medical care, even babies born very prematurely are more likely to survive today than ever before. Some health problems related to premature birth can last a lifetime and other problems, like delays in physical development, learning, communicating, taking care of themselves or getting along with others, can show up as your baby grows. The earlier in pregnancy a baby is born, the more likely they are to have health problems. Babies born before 34 weeks of pregnancy are most likely to have health problems, but babies born between 34 and 37 weeks of pregnancy are also at increased risk of having health problems related to premature birth. Some premature babies need to spend time in a hospital's newborn intensive care unit (NICU). This is the nursery in a hospital where sick newborns get medical care. Premature babies stay in the NICU until their organs develop enough to work on their own without medical support. Some babies need NICU care for weeks or months until they can breathe on their own, eat by mouth and maintain their body temperature and body weight.

Your baby may need special medical equipment, medicine or other treatment after he leaves the hospital. Your baby's provider and the staff at the hospital can help you with these things and teach you how to take care of your baby at home. They may recommend that you bring your baby to a neonatologist for checkups after your baby leaves the hospital. A neonatologist is a doctor who specializes in caring for premature babies and children. Talk to your baby's provider if you have any questions about your baby's health or long-term effects of premature birth. Some organizations like Hand to Hold (<https://handtohold.org/nicu-family-support/>), offer parent support groups and other resources to help you care for your baby.

\*Adapted from March of Dimes, Premature Babies

# MARCH OF DIMES HEALTH EQUITY WEEK NOVEMBER 15-20

November is Prematurity Awareness Month. During this time, we like to raise awareness of the infant health crisis of preterm birth. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. remains among the most dangerous developed nations for childbirth—a crisis fueled by the health equity gap in our health care system that puts women and babies of color at the greatest risk. Families affected by prematurity share an unspoken connection through their struggles, wins and losses.

March of Dimes is working to end preventable preterm birth and infant death and to close the health equity gap experienced by families of color in our healthcare system. To promote their mission, March of Dimes is hosting events each day during their Health Equity Week to raise awareness about prematurity and promote advocacy in this area. Health Equity Week starts on November 15th. Visit their website [here](#) to view events for each day and to read stories of families who have experienced preterm birth. November 17th is World Prematurity Day, so show your support by wearing purple and sharing your pictures on social media with #WorldPrematurityDay and @marchofdimes.



## WELCOME TO OUR HEALTHY START MANAGER KIMBERLY SHEPPARD!



### About Kimberly:

Kimberly has been a social worker for 30 years. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work from Boston University and a Master's Degree in Social Work from Boston College. She specializes in a number of areas including child welfare, permanency and safety planning, as well as trauma-informed care, case management, assessment and service planning, engagement, quality assurance, program management, and advocacy on behalf of marginalized and disenfranchised communities, families, and individuals. Kimberly was born and raised in Boston, MA, but has substantial family ties to Georgia. Kimberly relocated from Boston to Georgia in July 2021. She has two adult daughters, who also reside in Georgia and work in healthcare and Information Technology. Kimberly enjoys traveling, Zumba, and expanding her professional growth, knowledge, and experience. Kimberly looks forward to serving and advocating for the children, women, and families involved in our Healthy Start Program here in Cobb and Douglas counties.

## Events & Classes

### • **Stork's Nest**

Our local Stork's Nest is offering **free**, app-based learning modules for prenatal education classes. Earn a \$10 gift card per module! Register at <https://tinyurl.com/36k55u56> using Rho Xi Zeta for question 4.

### • **Riverside Neighborhood Community Garden, Sundays 1-2pm**

The garden offers **free** membership and classes. Free food is also given to volunteers. The garden is located at 875 Riverside Parkway, Austell, GA 30168. For more information, email: [RNCommunityGarden@gmail.com](mailto:RNCommunityGarden@gmail.com).

### • **Inspiring Fathers, Wednesdays 7-8pm**

This **free** program is designed for dads and expecting fathers who wish to learn more about fatherhood skills, traits, and practices over a three-month program cycle. It focuses on strengthening family resiliency, fatherhood involvement, and knowledge about parenting skills. This class follows the 24/7 Dads Curriculum and is held via Zoom. Call Chris White at 404-782-7158, for more information.

### • **Pickles & Ice Cream**

Pickles & Ice Cream offers free, live webinars covering prenatal, postpartum, breastfeeding, and newborn care. You can also earn up to \$20 in gift cards per class! To view class dates and times visit: <https://picklesandicecreamga.org/events>.

### • **Healthy Start Support Group**

CDPH's Healthy Start program recently launched a virtual support group for moms led by a therapist. Whether you're expecting or recently had your baby, you are welcome to attend. The group meets Tuesday evenings from 6:30-8pm. To join the Zoom call, use this link: <https://zoom.us/j/2925874010>.



## FEATURED PROGRAM: BABIES CAN'T WAIT

Babies Can't Wait is a comprehensive system of services for children with special needs from birth to three and their families. This system includes service coordination, therapeutic support, and transition to the school system. Through early identification and screening of children with developmental delays and chronic health conditions, BCW supports children and their families through developmental screenings and assessments, the creation of developmental goals, and implementing strategies to support those identified concerns. Therapeutic interventions such as Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech and Feeding Therapy, Special Instruction, Behavioral, and Family Supports may be recommended to support the identified concerns.

For more information, please call: 770-514-2759.