

WHAT IS LATE PRETERM BIRTH?

Late preterm birth is when a baby is born between 34 and 37 weeks of pregnancy. This is too early. The baby's brain and other organs have not had time to fully grow. Babies born too early may have more health problems and may need to stay in the hospital longer than babies that are born full-term. Full-term babies are born at about 40 weeks of pregnancy. The last few weeks of pregnancy can be uncomfortable for the mother. But staying pregnant until the baby is full-term is best, unless there are medical reasons that make it unsafe for the mother or baby.

WHY IS A FULL-TERM BABY WORTH THE WAIT?

- **A woman's due date is only a guess.** A due date can be wrong by about 2 weeks! For example, a woman may think she's 38 weeks pregnant based on her due date. But when she has her baby, the baby is only 36 weeks. A baby born at 36 weeks has not had enough time to grow.
- **The baby's brain isn't fully grown.** A baby's brain is the last major organ to develop. At 35 weeks, the baby's brain weighs only 2/3 of what it will weigh at full-term. The part of the brain we use for thinking (called the cerebral cortex) almost doubles in size during the last few weeks of pregnancy. Other parts of the brain are also still forming. Full-term babies have more time – very important time – for their brains to grow.
- **Late preterm babies are more likely than full-term babies to have health problems.** These problems can include:
 - Breathing problems. Some late preterm babies may need a machine called a ventilator to help them breathe.
 - Having trouble staying warm.
 - Feeding problems. They may not be able to suck or swallow.
 - Newborn jaundice, a condition where a baby's skin and the white parts of the eyes look yellow. Jaundice can cause brain damage if it's not treated.
 - Having to stay in the hospital longer after birth. Or having to go back to the hospital later because of medical problems.
 - A smaller and less-developed brain at birth.
 - As infants, they are more likely to have Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
 - As children, they often have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), hyperactivity and problems with behavior and learning.

As adults they are more likely to get heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes.