

## **SOUTHEAST PERINATAL ASSOCIATES**

### **PARENT INFORMATION ON PRETERM LABOR**

Dear Patient:

1. Most expectant mothers will experience uterine contractions. These are usually not regular and are of varying intensity. It is important that you learn to recognize these contractions. If your uterus hardens and you can not easily indent the uterus with a finger - it may be that you are having a contraction.. Some women may have "back labor" - in those cases, the contractions may be perceived as low back pain that comes and go.
2. If you feel contractions, please lie on your side (preferably the left side) and drink plenty of fluids (rest and hydration tends to decrease the irregular contractions we know as "Braxton-Hicks" or false labor).
3. It is not normal to have more than 4 contractions in 20 minutes. If your contractions are 4 in 20 minutes or 6 in an hour and they do not decrease with rest and hydration, or if they increase in intensity or frequency, Please call your Ob doctor's office for further instructions.
4. Premature labor occurs in about 10% of all pregnancies. If you had a preterm delivery before, there is tendency for PTB to recur in about 20% of pregnancies. Some of the general measures that are recommended to try to prevent premature labor are the avoidance of unnecessary physical activity such as heavy lifting, going up and down stairs, standing up for more than two hours at a time, sexual intercourse and over-distension of the bladder. These measures should be taken to decrease the incidence of premature labor, but they are by no means the answer to all of the problems.
5. In addition to maternal exertion, dehydration is another factor that will make your uterus contract. Make sure that you are well hydrated. This may require up to 2 additional liters of fluid during the day. Another way determine whether you are well hydrated is the frequency of urination and the character of the urine. If you are urinating less than once per hour, or if the urine is dark yellow - You probably can use more fluids. I recommend that you carry a water bottle and that you sip frequently. On a hot day, you may need to drink more fluids to stay hydrated. If you are urinating less than once per hour, drink more!
6. If in doubt, please call your Ob doctor's office.

Your Perinatologist

7/04