

WHAT PROBLEMS COULD MY BABY HAVE?

WHEN A BABY IS BORN BEFORE 37 WEEKS OF PREGNANCY, THAT BABY IS PREMATURE. WE DO NOT ALWAYS KNOW WHY A BABY IS BORN PRETERM. WE DO KNOW THAT THE OUTCOME FOR A PRETERM BABY DEPENDS A LOT ON HOW EARLY HE OR SHE IS BORN. BECAUSE THE BODY AND ORGANS OF A PRETERM BABY ARE NOT FULLY DEVELOPED, HE OR SHE IS AT RISK FOR HEALTH PROBLEMS. OVERALL, BECAUSE MEDICAL CARE IS IMPROVING, THE OUTCOMES FOR PRETERM BABIES ARE IMPROVING.



PRETERM BABIES ARE NOT FULLY DEVELOPED. THEY ARE AT GREATER RISK FOR HEALTH PROBLEMS SUCH AS:

- **INFECTIONS**
THE IMMUNE SYSTEM, WHICH IS NEEDED TO FIGHT AGAINST INFECTIONS, IS NOT FULLY DEVELOPED IN PRETERM BABIES. THEREFORE, THE BABIES CAN GET INFECTIONS EASILY. PRETERM BABIES MAY DEVELOP ONE OR MORE INFECTIONS WHILE IN THE HOSPITAL. MOST OF THESE INFECTIONS RESPOND TO TREATMENT WITH ANTIBIOTICS. OCCASIONALLY THE INFECTION IS SO SERIOUS THAT THE BABY MAY NOT SURVIVE.
- **BREATHING PROBLEMS**
A BABY'S LUNGS ARE NOT FULLY DEVELOPED UNTIL ABOUT 36 WEEKS. MOST BABIES BORN BEFORE 30 WEEKS GESTATION WILL NEED SOME HELP WITH BREATHING. SOME BABIES NEED EXTRA OXYGEN. OTHERS MAY ALSO NEED A BREATHING MACHINE CALLED A VENTILATOR TO HELP WITH BREATHING.
- **FEEDING PROBLEMS**
BABIES BORN BEFORE 30 WEEKS GESTATION NEED HELP WITH FEEDING. THEY ARE NOT MATURE ENOUGH TO SUCK AND SWALLOW WELL OR MAY NOT TOLERATE THEIR MILK. DEPENDING ON THEIR AGE AND CONDITION, THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO HELP PRETERM BABIES GET THE NUTRITION THEY NEED SUCH AS:
 - GIVING FOOD THROUGH A VEIN IN A SPECIAL INTRAVENOUS SOLUTION CALLED TOTAL PARENTERAL NUTRITION
 - FEEDING BREASTMILK OR FORMULA THROUGH A SOFT PLASTIC TUBE PUT THROUGH THE BABY'S NOSE INTO THE STOMACH, CALLED OROGASTRIC FEEDING
 - GIVING DONATED BREASTMILK, OR A SPECIAL FORMULA MADE FOR PRETERM BABIES, IF YOUR BREASTMILK IS NOT AVAILABLE.
- **TEMPERATURE PROBLEMS**
THE PART OF THE BRAIN THAT CONTROLS BODY TEMPERATURE IS NOT FULLY DEVELOPED AND THESE BABIES HAVE VERY LITTLE BODY FAT TO KEEP THEM WARM. AS A RESULT, PRETERM BABIES CAN LOSE HEAT VERY QUICKLY AND IT TAKES A LONG TIME TO WARM THEM UP AGAIN. WE CAN HELP YOUR BABY STAY WARM BY PUTTING A HAT ON YOUR BABY'S HEAD AND BY WARMING THE AIR IN THE INCUBATOR.