

Pre-term labor is defined as any labor before 37 weeks of pregnancy.

So if you have contractions and your cervix is opening before 37 weeks, we consider that pre-term labor.

So when pre-term labor starts and then ends up with a pre-term delivery, those babies aren't able to go home with mom.

We worry about things like their ability to breathe well, their ability to eat well and grow.

So we want to avoid pre-term labor and the eventual pre-term delivery when possible.

If you've had a pre-term birth in the past, that does increase your risk for pre-term labor the next time.

But really anyone could have pre-term labor in any pregnancy.

And so when you are pregnant and you come in to see us, we're happy to discuss all those risks and see if you yourself are at increased risk for pre-term labor.

So that we can try to maximize your chances this pregnancy of taking your next pregnancy to term.

Having contractions in pregnancy does not necessarily mean you are in pre-term labor or that you will end up with a pre-term delivery.

We are concerned when you have more than four to six contractions in an hour or if you have rhythmic back pain accompanied by vaginal bleeding or leakage of fluid.

Outside of those symptoms, pre-term contractions can sometimes be present because of dehydration. Sometimes it can be a full bladder and sometimes it can be fatigue.

So if you are experiencing pre-term contractions, some of the things that you can do to help would be drink plenty of fluids and make sure that you are staying hydrated. Try emptying your bladder, and really resting and staying off your feet for a while over the period of time that you're having those discomforts.

But if you're unsure and you've tried emptying your bladder, resting, making

sure that these contractions don't space out and just go away on their own, don't hesitate to call us.

Our OB/GYN nurses can help you differentiate between what are normal pregnancy symptoms and what potentially could be pre-term labor.

If you are experiencing pre-term labor, we would want you to be in the hospital.

We can do a couple of things to try to help.

First of all, we can give you an injection of medication that can help the baby's lungs mature and give them a better start if they are born early.

We can also give you medications to help stop your contractions and prevent the labor from progressing.

And hopefully prolong the time that the baby can stay inside and grow.