



Ask the Expert
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By: James Zozobrado, M.D., F.A.A.P.

Q. I delivered my first baby at 31 weeks via c-section and my baby had to be transferred to another hospital while I recovered. It was very traumatic for me, but thankfully we are both doing well today. I'm expecting again and I know I'm at high risk for a repeat preterm birth, but my doctor insists we can deliver at Chandler Regional Medical Center again. I don't want to be separated from my baby again – what are my options?

A. I am going to guess that you delivered your baby at Chandler Regional prior to August 2008 since you and your baby were separated due to preterm birth. The good news is that since then, Chandler Regional's nursery has received an advanced certification from the Arizona Perinatal Trust that allows them to care for infants delivered as early as 28 weeks. The primary reason they wanted to qualify for this Level IIEQ designation was to be able to care for moms like you who deliver preterm but are unable to remain with their babies. We recognize the importance of early bonding and do everything we can to keep moms and their newborns together, even if the baby needs special care.

You are indeed at risk for a second preterm delivery. If you haven't already, be sure to discuss with your caregiver the circumstances surrounding your first delivery, and ask for a referral to a neonatologist who is credentialed to deliver at one of the area's hospitals with a Level IIEQ or Level III nursery (this includes Chandler Regional and Banner Desert in the East Valley). If you do go into preterm labor, you and your baby can both be cared for at the hospital where you deliver, avoiding costly and sometimes time-sensitive transfers to a facility with a higher level of care. Level IIEQ nurseries are staffed with specially trained neonatal nurse practitioners and on-call neonatologists around the clock. They also must have certain processes in place critical to the early treatment of babies born prematurely.

I wish you the best of luck with this pregnancy and delivery. Here's to your health – for both of you!

James Zozobrado, M.D., F.A.A.P., is the chairman of Chandler Regional Medical Center's Department of Pediatrics. For information on physician referrals or community classes and support groups, please contact the ResourceLink toll-free at 1.877.728.5414.