



Catholic Healthcare West

**Ask the Expert**  
*Arizona Republic*

**Julie Hoffman, B.S.N., R.N.C., M.B.A.**

**Q: What kind care is needed if my baby is born prematurely?**

**A:** Babies that are born before 37 weeks gestation are considered premature. And, according to the March of Dimes, one out of eight babies in the United States is born prematurely. More than half a million babies who are born prematurely each year are not only often born small, but they also face several complications, and are at increased risk for serious medical complications and lasting disabilities.

Information provided by the March of Dimes indicates that premature babies can face serious complications, including: heart problems; intestinal problems; serious breathing problems that typically affect babies born before 34 weeks gestation; bleeding in the brain, especially for babies born before 32 weeks gestation; and eye problems that mostly affect babies born before 32 weeks gestation.

If you are pregnant and experience one the following signs of preterm labor provided by the March of Dimes, immediately call your health care provider or go directly to the hospital:

- Contractions every 10 minutes or more often
- Clear or bloody discharge
- Pelvic pressure - the feeling that your baby is pushing down
- Low, dull backache
- Cramps that feel like your period
- Abdominal cramps with or without diarrhea

If your baby is born early, Chandler Regional Medical Center's Family Birth Center has the specialized staff and the medical technology to care for babies as young as 28 weeks gestation. The Family Birth Center, along with its Level IIEQ Nursery, can provide respiratory support using nasal CPAP and short-term ventilator interventions to care for you baby.

To learn more about premature babies, please visit [www.marchofdimes.com](http://www.marchofdimes.com).

*Julie Hoffman, B.S.N., R.N.C., M.B.A., is the Director of the Family Birth Center at Chandler Regional Medical Center. For more information, please visit [www.chandlerregional.org](http://www.chandlerregional.org).*