

Born too soon: improving health outcomes for premature babies

Prematurity: the facts

Preterm infants are born before **37 weeks** of gestation

15 million babies are born prematurely every year¹

This equates to more than **1 in 10** babies born too soon²



Premature birth is a major determinant of neonatal morbidity and mortality risk

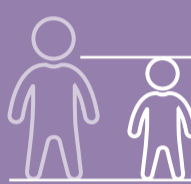
In fact, prematurity is responsible for **85%** of all complications in early life



Health problems that can last a lifetime include:



Respiratory difficulties



Developmental issues and poor growth



Increased risk of chronic disease and infections, such as high blood pressure and heart disease



Visual and hearing impairments



Learning and behavioral difficulties

Science shows that the shorter the length of gestation, the worse health outcomes are in infants³



A global challenge



Research suggests early births are on the rise in most countries worldwide

Preterm birth is now the leading cause of death in children under 5 years of age, with more than **1 million children** dying each year due to problems associated with prematurity⁴

This creates significant burdens on families and healthcare systems around the world



Educating women is key



Preventing premature birth can help babies lead longer, healthier lives⁵

March of Dimes

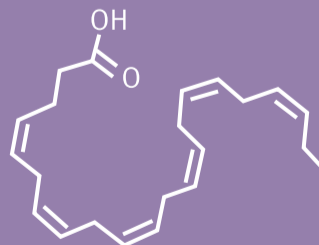


Reducing the risk of mortality and complications from preterm birth starts with a healthy pregnancy and optimal nutrition



Healthcare professionals play a vital role in educating women about the benefits of long chain omega-3 supplementation during pregnancy

A daily dietary supplement with at least **500mg of the omega-3 fatty acid docosahexaenoic acid (DHA)**, taken from the beginning of the 2nd trimester of pregnancy through to birth, could significantly reduce the risk of premature births according to the authors of the latest **Cochrane Systematic Review^{6,7}**



The risk of having a baby with a low birthweight (<2,500 g) is also **reduced by 10%⁸**

To stay updated on the latest nutrition science impacting all stages of life, please subscribe to the NUTRI-FACTS newsletter at: www.nutri-facts.org

1. World Health Organization, [website], <http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/preterm-birth>, 2018.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Boyle E. et al., 'Effects of gestational age at birth on health outcomes at 3 and 5 years of age: population-based cohort study', *BMJ*, vol. 344, 2012.
 4. Ibid.
 5. March of Dimes, 'Preterm labor & premature death', [website], <https://www.marchofdimes.org/complications/preterm-labor-and-premature-baby.aspx>, 2018.
 6. Middleton P. et al., 'Omega-3 fatty acid addition during pregnancy', *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, 2018.
 7. SAHMRI Research, 'Information for healthcare professionals – omega-3 long-chain fats to prevent preterm birth. Findings from the 2018 Cochrane Systematic Review', [factsheet], https://www.sahmriresearch.org/user_assets/2b06cb6a6df1doaccabf394907f750e72d88b623/health_professional_summary_cochrane_review_151118.pdf, 2018.
 8. Op. cit. Middleton P. et al.