Facts about Preterm Birth

Preterm births are those that occur prior to 37 completed weeks of gestation. They are classified as moderately preterm (32-36 weeks) and very preterm (less than 32 completed weeks). A variety of complications can occur with preterm births, and preterm infants are considered to be a higher risk for developmental delays.

According to the March of Dimes, approximately 1 in 8 babies was born preterm in Georgia in 2012. Multiple births (more than one baby) were 6 times more likely to be preterm.

MEDICAL FACTORS

- Urinary tract infections, vaginal infections, sexually transmitted infections and possibly other infections
- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Clotting disorders (thrombophilia)
- Bleeding from the vagina
- Certain birth defects in the baby
- Being pregnant with a single fetus after in vitro fertilization (IVF)
- Being underweight before pregnancy
- Obesity
- Short time period between pregnancies (less than 6-9 months between birth and the beginning of the next pregnancy)

Research has also documented other risk factors for preterm births that are modifiable.

These are lifestyle factors:

- Late or no prenatal care
- Smoking
- Drinking alcohol
- Using illegal drugs
- Exposure to the medication DES
- Domestic violence, including physical, sexual or emotional abuse
- Lack of social support
- Stress
- Long working hours with long periods of standing

Risk Factors for Preterm Birth:

**Maternal Age:** Mothers who are older (over 40) and very young (under 20) have the highest rates of very preterm births in Georgia.

**Race/Ethnicity:** The 2012 preterm birth rate among non-Hispanic black infants remains the highest of all racial groups at 16.8 percent. This is more than 1.5 times the rate of non-Hispanic whites.

**Plurality:** Multiple births were 9 times more likely than singleton births to be born very preterm in Georgia.

**Previous Birth History:** Women with a history of previous preterm births are more likely to experience another.

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