

Dear Employee,

Why the Last Week of Pregnancy Count

Births scheduled before the 39th completed week of pregnancy for non-medical reasons can cause problems for both mothers and babies. The early scheduling of births by either induction (when medicine is given to a mother to induce labor) or cesarean section (a surgical procedure) is occurring more and more.

Sometimes mothers request to schedule an early delivery, or sometimes a healthcare provider may recommend it. Regardless of the reason, guidelines developed by doctors and researchers say it's not the best practice. The main reason is that important development takes place to your baby's brain and lungs during those last few weeks of pregnancy.

The [March of Dimes](#) recommends waiting 39 weeks because:

- Important organs, like a baby's brain, lungs and liver, get the time they need to fully grow.
- The baby has time to gain more weight in the womb. Babies born at a healthy weight have an easier time staying warm than babies born too small.
- The baby gets the ability to suck and swallow, and stay awake long enough to eat after being born. Babies born too early can't always do these things.

If you'd like to read more about why the last few weeks of pregnancy are so important to you and your baby and to get a list of questions you may want to ask your healthcare provider at your next pre-natal care checkup, visit the March of Dimes website at

http://www.marchofdimes.com/pregnancy/getready_atleast39weeks.html.

What's going on at your hospital?

If you would like information on how often your delivery hospital schedules early cesarean sections and inductions visit www.leapfroggroup.org/tooearlydeliveries. The Leapfrog Group, a non-profit organization that compares hospitals on national standards of safety and quality, asked hospitals to voluntarily report their rate of scheduled early deliveries before 39 completed weeks of pregnancy.