

Help for High-Risk Pregnancies



Expert Advice From:

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Miller Children's & Women's Eases Worry for Mothers-to-Be and Their Babies

Women who delay childbirth, are obese or significantly overweight, or have diabetes or other serious health issues are more likely to experience high-risk pregnancies – making the condition increasingly common.

According to the National Institutes of Health, a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, a high-risk pregnancy is one that threatens the health or life of the mother or her fetus. It often requires specialized care from specially trained providers. Some pregnancies become high risk as they progress, while some women are at increased risk for complications even before they get pregnant for a variety of reasons.

Women at risk for complications during pregnancy can seek treatment at MemorialCare Miller Children's & Women's Hospital Long Beach, offering state-of-the-art care and highly experienced teams of health professionals who are experts in high-risk pregnancies and neonatal intensive care.

"Some people shy away from the term, which can include women who are carrying multiple fetuses, are older than 35- to 45-years-of-age, or have preexisting medical conditions, such as high blood pressure or diabetes," says Dr. Michael P. Nageotte, maternal-fetal medicine specialist, and associate chief medical officer, Miller Children's & Women's.

"In addition, socioeconomic level, fitness level and access to adequate prenatal care can affect a woman's risk during pregnancy." Nationwide, he adds, health care professionals are concerned with the tragic, often fatal consequences of women experiencing high-risk pregnancies who don't receive adequate prenatal or post-natal care.

"In California, we have one of the big success stories," he notes, "there is a nationwide increase in maternal mortality thanks to many factors, including the opioid epidemic and the obesity epidemic."

- Sometimes a woman's choice to deliver her baby at home can put both at higher risk of complications, he says. In a few smaller rural communities, a lack of access to prenatal care is a factor as well.
- Miller Children's & Women's has a history of commitment to serving women in its community experiencing high-risk pregnancies and their babies, many of which require care in the hospital's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).
- "We offer a unique combination of large and robust nurseries with very active labor and delivery units," Dr. Nageotte explains.
- "The volume and expertise of our clinicians prompts a large number of referrals from obstetricians, who transfer care of high-risk women to us."
- The hospital offers a multi-disciplinary approach to treating pregnant patients and newborns, he notes, with highly experienced nurses, social workers, psychologists and others working together to ensure patients' best outcomes.
- "Best of all, women and their babies can be treated under one roof," he observes. "Not being able to be with your baby is emotionally challenging for women with a newborn that is transported to another hospital for neonatal intensive care."
- Women and their physicians must be knowledgeable about the special hospital available at Miller Children's & Women's.
- "It's a superb center, and different from other labor and delivery centers," he concludes. "The important thing is that patients are comfortable with their physicians and believe in their capabilities."

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Stephanie dreamed of the perfect pregnancy, but at 26 weeks, her water broke and she was rushed to her local hospital. At the recommendation of her doctor, Stephanie was transported to MemorialCare Miller Children's & Women's Hospital Long Beach, which is equipped to care for such a premature baby. Maternal-fetal medicine specialists and neonatologists, who are in-house 24/7, delayed delivery, and Izabell was born at 33 weeks. Izabell was taken just down the hall to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) under the same roof as Stephanie – so mom and baby were never separated during their care. After 22 days, Izabell went home, and today both mom and baby are thriving.

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