

BORN TOO SOON: REDUCING THE RISK OF PRETERM BIRTH

through Healthy Timing and Spacing of Pregnancy (HTSP)

What is preterm birth?

Preterm birth (PTB), live birth before the 37th week of pregnancy, is the leading cause of death for newborns less than four weeks old—and of all children under 5. An estimated 15 million infants, or more than one in 10 worldwide, are born too soon every year. Causing nearly 1 million annual newborn deaths, the rising rate of PTB is a global health problem.

What are the long-term effects of preterm birth?

Babies that survive preterm birth may face a lifetime of disability and illness because their bodies are not yet fully developed, increasing their susceptibility to disease and infection. Chances for survival also greatly depend on where they are born. As is the case with many global health problems, 60 percent of PTBs are concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Prevention is key—we must focus on reducing the frequency of preterm birth.

IMPACTS OF PRETERM BIRTH

- PTB is the leading global cause of death for newborns and children under 5
- Nearly 1 million newborns die each year of complications from PTB
- Babies that survive preterm birth may face a lifetime of disability

What can we do to prevent preterm birth?

Limited access to safe and proper health facilities and services is a major reason preterm birth is more common in the developing world. Two more key risk factors for PTB are adolescent pregnancy and pregnancies spaced by less than three years. Delaying pregnancy until adulthood and spacing pregnancies by at least three years can greatly reduce these risks.

In addition, educating women on caring for themselves and their infants before, during, and after pregnancy is vital in preventing preterm birth. Integrating family planning and maternal and child health services is one critical way to improve health outcomes for mothers and children across the different stages of life. According to the WHO, an estimated three in four preterm babies could survive if their mothers had access to highly effective yet inexpensive interventions such as breastfeeding support, basic care for infections, newborn resuscitation, and training in infant care such as warmth and proper nutrition.

SAVING PRETERM BABIES WITH COST-EFFECTIVE CARE

“To help reduce preterm birth rates, women need improved care before, between and during pregnancies. Better access to contraceptives and increased empowerment could also help reduce preterm births.”

—World Health Organization
“Preterm birth,” Fact Sheet No. 363, November 2015

Everyone has a role to play

World Vision uses an approach in its health and family planning programs called Healthy Timing and Spacing of Pregnancy (HTSP). We advise couples to time their pregnancies during a mother's healthiest years (ages 18 to 34) and space pregnancies by 3 to 5 years. Practicing HTSP improves maternal health before and after pregnancy, and also reduces the likelihood of preterm birth.

To learn more about PTB, read *Born Too Soon: The Global Action Report on Preterm Birth*, published by the WHO in 2012. For more information about World Vision's work, contact [Lisa Bos](mailto:Lisa.Bos@worldvision.org) at [Lbos@worldvision.org](mailto:Lisa.Bos@worldvision.org).

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HEALTHY TIMING AND SPACING OF PREGNANCY (HTSP) transforms mothers' and children's lives

If **120 MILLION WOMEN** get access to family planning by 2020:

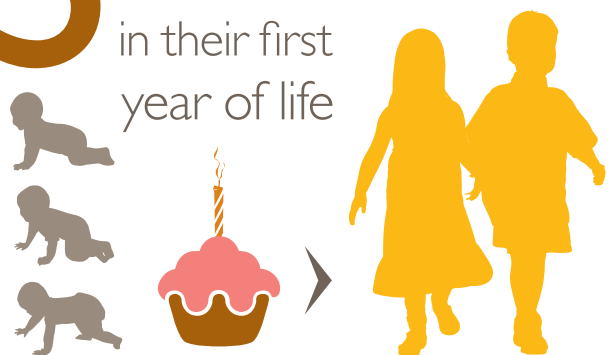
200,000



AND

3 MILLION

fewer babies will die
in their first
year of life



For more info, contact Amanda Medlock at amedlock@worldvision.org or visit worldvision.org/advocacy