

# Benefits of Waiting

Give your baby a healthy start in life

Having a healthy pregnancy depends a lot on being healthy beforehand, and having a healthy baby depends a lot on waiting until at least 39 weeks to deliver.

The trend has become increasingly common for expectant mothers to schedule early deliveries due to non-medical reasons, including convenience, discomfort and a variety of other reasons. Health experts agree that it's best for mother and baby to stay pregnant for at least 39 weeks. It's also best to wait until you go into labor naturally if you have a healthy pregnancy. Following your Network Provider's advice and staying healthy can help give you and your baby the best possible outcome and support a full-term delivery.

Research shows that the last weeks of pregnancy are essential for the full development of important organs, the brain, lungs and liver. Babies born before 39 weeks are at higher risk of health complications including vision and hearing problems and low birth weight. Early elective delivery is also linked to infant illnesses and other lasting health impacts with no benefit to the mother or baby. Babies born after 39 weeks of gestation have more time for their brains, lungs and liver to properly develop.

Despite the overwhelming evidence against performing early elective deliveries, a 2012 report by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reveals an estimated 10-15 percent of babies in the U.S. continue to be delivered early without medical cause. According to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, infants born between 36 and 38 weeks may weigh as much and appear to be as healthy as those born later but are more likely to have serious lung problems and other medical conditions resulting in admissions to the neonatal intensive care unit.

Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi has partnered with its Network Providers, the March of Dimes, the Mississippi Department of Health and others to reduce the frequency of early term deliveries without medical reason. This initiative works to support expectant mothers in having a healthy, full-term pregnancy, reduce risks of complications during childbirth and to give new babies a healthy start in life.

In partnership with its Network Providers, Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi has implemented medical policy that clearly defines best-practice standards for medically necessary early term delivery of babies and supports the practice of evidence-based medicine. This policy means that Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi will only provide benefits for the early term delivery of babies when there is a medical necessity based on the medical policy. This policy does not apply to pregnancies and deliveries when labor occurs naturally prior to 39 weeks.

Review the policy online at [www.bcbsms.com](http://www.bcbsms.com) and share a copy with your Network Provider early in your pregnancy.

**“Allowing a baby to reach 39 weeks in a healthy pregnancy has long-lasting health benefits for the child. A few more days of pregnancy can mean a lifetime of difference.” Dr. Wayne Slocum, Mississippi Section Chair of the American Congress of Obstetrics and Gynecology**

**“This initiative is all about healthy moms, healthy babies and strong, positive outcomes. Early elective deliveries that are not medically necessary increase the risk of infant harm and even death. Unless there is a medical reason, there is no reason to induce early delivery.” – Mississippi State Health Officer Dr. Mary Currier**



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of Mississippi**

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