

## Causes and Risk Factors of Low Birth Weight in Babies

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Low birth weight (LBW) babies are the babies who born weighing less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces. Babies are born this tiny it is very rare. The weight of an average newborn is usually about 8 pounds [1]. The majority of LBW in low income countries is due to Intrauterine Growth Retardation (IUGR), while it is mostly due to preterm birth in high income countries [2]. LBW babies are 20 times more likely to develop complications and die in comparison to normal weight babies. They are in the risk of cognitive deficits, motor delays, cerebral palsy, and other behavior and psychological problem [3].

One of the most often causes of LBW is premature birth (born too early), as a premature baby has less time in the mother's womb (uterus) to grow and gain weight. It means before 37 weeks of pregnancy. Another cause of low birth weight is a condition called IUGR. IUGR occurs when a baby does not grow well during pregnancy. It may be because of problems with the placenta, the mother's health, or the baby's health [3]. In addition to these there are other things that affect the pregnant woman and can increase the risk of having low-birth-weight baby. These are Smoking, Alcohol or drug use, Age less than 17 years or more than 35 years, Infection during pregnancy, Previous pregnancy with a low-birth-weight baby, Not gaining enough weight during pregnancy and African-American background [4].

Low-birth-weight babies often have problems. The low birth weight baby's tiny body is not as strong as a baby of normal birth weight. The low body weight infants may have a harder time eating, gaining weight, and fighting infection. They often have a hard time staying warm because they don't have much fat on their bodies. Premature born babies often have complications which are sometimes hard to tell if the problems are because they were born early, or because they are so small. Some of the

common problems of low-birth-weight babies are Low oxygen levels at birth, Infection, Nervous system problems, such as bleeding inside the brain, Breathing problems and immature lungs, sudden infant death syndrome, Digestive problems, such as serious inflammation of the intestines, Yellow color to the skin or eyes, Persistent ductus arteriosus which causes extra blood to flow through the lungs because an open blood vessel needed for fetal circulation does not close correctly at birth, Retinopathy of prematurity a diseases of the eye where the retina does not develop correctly. LBW babies are at risk for long-term complications and disability also such as Blindness, Deafness, Developmental delay and Cerebral palsy [3].

Because of advances in the care of sick and premature babies more babies are surviving. One of the best ways to prevent babies being born with low birth weight is preventing preterm births. The best way to prevent preterm births and low-birth-weight babies is regular prenatal care. At prenatal visits, the healthcare provider will check the health of pregnant woman and her baby. Also it is important to follow a healthy diet during pregnancy which will help the pregnant woman to gain enough weight to help the baby grow and help stay healthy and not drink alcohol, smoke, or use drugs [1].

### References

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