



March of Dimes
Birth Defects Foundation
National Office
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Dr. Jennifer L. Howse
President

Dear Healthcare Professional Colleague:

Every year in the United States, more than half a million babies are born prematurely. This epidemic continues to escalate, as the rate of preterm birth has increased almost 30 percent between 1983 - 2003. Since 2003, the March of Dimes has taken on the fight to defeat prematurity through our Prematurity Campaign. Our goals are to raise awareness about preterm birth and ultimately find its causes and cure.

The California Chapter of the March of Dimes, in partnership with Sutter Medical Center Sacramento worked to address this by creating an evidence-based *Preterm Labor Assessment Toolkit*. This toolkit has been endorsed by California District IX ACOG and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine. I invite you to review this evidence-based toolkit and ask you to consider implementing and distributing it in your practice setting.

The objective of the toolkit is to standardize the assessment and diagnosis of preterm labor among healthcare professionals to allow for:

- A uniform diagnosis of preterm labor
- Timely interventions
- Proper transport of patients at greatest risk for preterm delivery to more appropriate levels of care
- A decrease in unnecessary hospitalizations and treatments
- Improved allocation of scarce nursing/hospital resources
- Increased maternal-fetal safety

This toolkit provides guidance for the assessment and triage of women with suspected preterm labor, but it does not dictate treatment. We urge you to look at how you currently assess women who present with signs of preterm labor and compare it with the evidenced-based guidelines offered in the toolkit.

The toolkit contains:

- Baseline Hospital Assessment Tools
- Protocol for Care/Disposition of Women Presenting with Symptoms of preterm Labor
- Preterm Labor Assessment Preprinted Physician Orders
- Preterm Labor Triage Algorithms
- Home Care Instructions for Women At Risk for Preterm Labor
- Preterm Labor Patient Education
- Instructions for Medical Procedures
- Professional Competencies
- Preterm Labor Patient Education
- Instructions for Medical Procedures
- Professional Competencies
- Preterm Labor Assessment Presentation

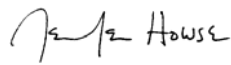
- March of Dimes Education Materials
- March of Dimes Preterm Labor Assessment Reference List

Our hope is healthcare professionals, hospitals, and birthing centers across the country will join March of Dimes chapters in establishing standard protocols to minimize premature delivery and optimize outcomes when preterm labor does occur.

If your hospital or birthing center would like to adopt the standards contained in the toolkit, please consider working with your March of Dimes Chapter. To find your local chapter or to download a free copy of the toolkit and learn more about the March of Dimes Prematurity Campaign, please visit our website at www.marchofdimes.com.

Together, we can improve the outcomes for babies of women who experience preterm labor.

Sincerely,



Dr. Jennifer L. Howse

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