

Abruptio Placenta

A condition where the placenta prematurely separates from the uterine wall before delivery. The specific cause of this is unknown, but factors that may contribute to include trauma/injury to the abdomen or the rapid loss of the fluid that surrounds and cushions the baby.

The results may vary based on degree of separation. Partial separation can result in vaginal bleeding correlated with abdominal pain. The fetus can acquire decreased blood flow and will respond with increased/decreased heart rate. Acute or total separation causes the fetus to lose its supply of oxygen and nutrients essential for sustaining life.

This can have an effect on the mother as well. If total abruption occurs, the mother could have increased risk of bleeding from many systems which could lead to death.

There are several severe long term effects that can occur due to this condition. This may cause decreased availability of oxygen; decreased blood flow to the brain; or the death of the infant and/or mother. Repeated abruptions may result in delayed growth of the child.

Premature Rupture of Membranes

A common condition that initiates premature delivery of a child. The bag of waters that surrounds the fetus breaks prior to the 37th week of pregnancy. The causes of this is varied and hard to determine. It is thought that an infant who has acquired an infection may initiate the process.

Even with a ruptured sack, the infant will continue to produce the fluid that the mother then continues to leak until delivery occurs. Any bacteria /virus that may be present in the mother's vaginal tract can come into contact with the fetus. Careful observation of the mother and fetus for distress or infection can delay the delivery process.

Long term effects of this condition mainly effect the infant. There is possible interruption of normal physical growth related to alterations in the environment. This may speed up the process of maturation of the lungs in the fetus as it's self-protective mechanisms sense impending delivery. This condition in itself actually speeds up the delivery process, but it does put the infant at risk for infections due to the loss of the protective barrier that surrounded the infant.