

Using ART, what are the risks of having a preterm birth and low birth weight infant?

Preterm birth occurs when a woman gives birth before 37 full weeks of pregnancy. Low birth weight infants are born weighing less than 2,500 grams or about 5 pounds, 8 ounces. Infants born preterm or with low birth weight are at greater risk of death in the first few days of life, as well as other adverse health outcomes, including visual and hearing impairments, intellectual and learning disabilities, and behavioral and emotional problems throughout life. Preterm births and low birth weight infants also cause substantial emotional and economic burdens for families.

Figure 12 shows percentages of preterm births and low birth weight infants resulting from ART cycles that used fresh nondonor eggs or embryos in 2012, by number of infants born. For singletons, it shows separately the percentage of preterm birth and low birth weight among infants born from pregnancies that started with one fetus (single-fetus pregnancies) and with more than one fetus (multiple-fetus pregnancies). Among singletons, the percentage of preterm births and low birth weight infants was higher for those from multiple-fetus pregnancies. In the general US population, where singletons are almost always the result of a single-fetus pregnancy, 10% of singleton births were preterm and 6% of singleton infants had low birth weight.

Figure 12

Percentages of Births That Were Preterm or Infants with Low Birth Weight from ART Cycles Using Fresh Nondonor Eggs or Embryos, by Number of Infants Born, 2012

