

Simple test to predict if pregnant women will give birth prematurely

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Babies born early run a greater risk of serious complications. The researchers at the Sahlgrenska Academy, University of Gothenburg, Sweden, have now developed a method to predict if pregnant women with preterm contractions will give birth within seven days. The method offers new possibilities to delay delivery and prepare care for the premature baby.

Delivery before 37 full weeks, so-called preterm delivery, is the biggest problem in perinatal medicine today, as it increases the risk of the child being seriously ill in the short and long term. The problem is that only 30 per cent of women who come in with early contractions actually give birth before full term.

Researchers at the Sahlgrenska Academy, University of Gothenburg, studied 142 [pregnant women](#) who came to Sahlgrenska University Hospital during the years 1995-2005 with early contractions without rupture of the membranes. As a result of the study, the researchers have developed a new method that can predict with high precision if a [pregnant woman](#) with contractions will give birth within seven days.

"To have time to give the woman [cortisone](#), which speeds up the development of the fetal lungs, it is common practice to delay the delivery by a couple of days with the help of tocolytic treatment. Being able to predict if a woman who comes to the hospital with preterm contractions will actually give birth early and thereby requires follow-up and possible treatment is therefore very important," according to

Panagiotis Tsiartas, researcher at the Sahlgrenska Academy, University of Gothenburg and specialist at the Obstetrical and Gynecological Clinic at Sahlgrenska University Hospital.

The method is based on a newly developed [blood test](#) that looks at two specific proteins in the woman's blood combined with an already established examination that uses ultrasound to measure the length of the [cervix](#).

"Statistically, the method can predict with 75 to 80 per cent accuracy if a woman will give birth early," said Panagiotis Tsiartas.

"We will need to conduct further studies before the method can be used in full, but if the results of these studies are good, the test will hopefully lead to new types of treatments to prevent premature birth and treat the serious complications resulting from it," Panagiotis Tsiartas continues.

The article "Prediction of spontaneous preterm delivery in women with threatened preterm labour: a prospective cohort study of multiple proteins in maternal serum" is published in the *British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology*.

More information: [onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10 ... 012.03328.x/abstract](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1471-2546.12345)

Provided by University of Gothenburg

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