Worldwide, preeclampsia is responsible for up to 20% of the 13 million preterm births each year. Although U.S. research is scant on this topic, this same rate applied in the U.S. means preeclampsia is one of the leading *known* causes of prematurity, responsible for as many as 100,000 of the total 500,000 premature births annually in the US
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The March of Dimes and their international partners have declared November 17 as World Prematurity Day, focusing the world's attention on the serious problem of premature birth. We invite all our members to help honor the millions of babies worldwide who died this year because they were born too soon, and the 12 million more who struggle to survive. What can you do?

1.

Wear purple for World Prematurity Day on Nov. 17.

2.

"Like" World Prematurity Day on Facebook. Read stories from around the world and share your own. Help spread the word by updating your Facebook status with a message on premature birth. Together we can raise awareness of this serious problem and help more babies start healthy lives. Read the story of Preeclampsia Foundation volunteer Kristina Lowman about the premature births of both her daughters due to the devastating effects of preeclampsia.

A baby is considered premature in developed countries if born prior to 37 weeks gestation (almost one month early), but most severe prematurity issues occur to babies born earlier than eight months gestation (approximately 32 weeks). The impact of prematurity can have greater consequences somewhat later in developing countries, because those countries often lack the resources that preemies require.

Preterm birth has a wide range of consequences from fairly inconsequential to major neurologic damage. Some babies may spend only a day or two under close observation while others may spend the first months of their life in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) causing a great deal of emotional and financial stress on the family. More information about preterm birth can be found at the March of Dimes website .