



Preventing Hypoxic-Ischemic Encephalopathy (HIE)

An Ounce of Prevention is Worth a Pound of Cure: Preventing Oxygen Deprivation in a Baby

It is very important to remember that [hypoxic-ischemic encephalopathy \(HIE\)](#) occurs due to oxygen deprivation. Because of this, preventing the oxygen deprivation that causes HIE is key. To prevent oxygen deprivation, medical professionals must closely monitor the health of babies during pregnancy, the birthing process, and the neonatal period.

In many cases, the underlying [risk factors and causes](#) can be recognized, mitigated, and controlled in order to prevent HIE. Indeed, one of the common threads that tie together many preventable cases of HIE is the failure on the part of medical professionals to carry out the standards of care. These medical mistakes can include:



- A failure to deliver a baby in time (if the mother has a post-term pregnancy, or if health complications necessitate early delivery)
- A failure in recognizing that the baby's heart rate is abnormal on the [fetal monitoring](#) strips
- A failure to resuscitate or intubate the baby in time
- A failure to recognize and act on other relevant risk factors

Sometimes these errors can also be due to a failure of basic communication between the various care providers – results of certain tests or procedures may not be communicated or can get lost, especially during shift changes or between departments. Because the



prevention of oxygen deprivation is so heavily dependent on medical care providers, it is essential that these professionals provide appropriate care to their patients, and communicate with each other effectively.

There are several specific measures that can be taken to prevent HIE when risk factors are present. Click the following links to learn more about specific preventative measures:

- [*Prenatal testing*](#) - Several tests can be administered to confirm the well-being of the baby, identify risk factors, and ensure that an oxygen-depriving event does not occur.
- [*Prenatal and neonatal care*](#) - Excellent care before, during, and after birth is essential in preventing oxygen deprivation, especially in [*high-risk pregnancies*](#). Women with high-risk pregnancies should be referred to maternal-fetal specialists who can provide more extensive monitoring and care. This is critically important for the health of the mother as well as the baby.
- [*Fetal heart rate monitoring*](#) - A machine is used to assess the fetal status and well-being before and during labor and delivery.
- [*Preventing premature birth*](#) - Premature babies are at a greater risk for HIE than are babies born at term because they are underdeveloped and extra sensitive to brain damage from oxygen deprivation. Because of this, certain methods can be used to keep babies inside the womb until they are more prepared for the birthing process and the outside world. [*Cervical cerclage*](#), [*progesterone*](#), and [*magnesium sulfate*](#) are three common methods of preventing premature birth.
- [*Betamethasone*](#) - If premature birth cannot be prevented, the corticosteroid betamethasone can be given in-utero to help prepare the premature baby for life outside the womb. It accelerates development of the baby's organs and tissues.
- [*Magnesium sulfate*](#) - As mentioned already, magnesium sulfate can help to prevent premature birth. It can also be used to instill neuroprotective effects on the fetal brain if premature birth is inevitable.
- [*C-section delivery*](#) - A method of delivery that may be required in order to prevent or relieve fetal oxygen deprivation.



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About the HIE Help Center and ABC Law Centers

The HIE Help Center is run by [ABC Law Centers](#), a medical malpractice firm exclusively handling cases involving HIE and other birth injuries. Our lawyers have over 100 years of combined experience with this type of law, and have been advocating for children with HIE and related disabilities since the firm's inception in 1997.

We are passionate about helping families obtain the compensation necessary to cover their extensive medical bills, loss of wages (if one or both parents have to miss work in order to care for their child), assistive technology, and other necessities.

If you suspect your child's HIE may have been caused by medical negligence, please contact us today to learn more about pursuing a case. We provide free legal consultations, during which we will inform you of your [legal options](#) and answer any questions you have. Moreover, you would pay nothing throughout the entire legal process unless we win.

You are also welcome to reach out to us with inquiries that are not related to malpractice. We cannot provide individualized medical advice, but we're happy to track down informational resources for you.