

Cervical device may help lower preemie birth risk

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(HealthDay)—Women with a relatively short cervix are at higher risk of

preterm delivery, but new research shows that a cervical device may cut that risk substantially.

The Italian study included 300 [women](#) with a short cervix. Half of them used a small silicone ring called a cervical pessary, while the other half acted as a "control" group and did not use the device.

A cervical pessary is designed to keep the cervix closed and to change the inclination of the cervical canal. Previous findings about the effectiveness of the device have been contradictory, the researchers noted.

In this study, women who used the cervical [device](#) had about half the risk of preterm birth—defined as delivery at less than 34 weeks of pregnancy—compared to women in the [control group](#).

Women who used the pessary also tended to deliver larger, healthier babies that did not require neonatal ICU care, the study found.

Use of the pessary did not cut down on the need for C-section delivery, infections or the risk of fetal or infant death.

The study was conducted at just one facility and the findings must be confirmed in larger clinical trials conducted at multiple sites, said a team led by Dr. Gabriele Saccone, of the University of Naples Federico II.

One U.S. obstetrician-gynecologist said the findings could be a boon for women.

"The pessary is a low-cost treatment with almost no risks and does not require anesthesia," said Dr. Jennifer Wu, of Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City. "It holds real promise for helping with shortened [cervix](#) patients, especially in low-resource areas."

Dr. James Ducey, director of maternal-fetal medicine at Staten Island University Hospital, in New York City, called the study "well done." However, he agreed that "more high-quality research is needed" to determine whether the pessary can "make an impact on the preterm birth rate."

The study was published Dec. 19 in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

More information: Jennifer Wu, M.D., obstetrician/gynecologist, Lenox Hill Hospital, New York City; James Ducey, M.D., director, obstetrics and maternal fetal medicine, Staten Island University Hospital, New York City; Dec. 19, 2017, news release, *Journal of the American Medical Association*

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [preterm birth](#).

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