

**Prematurity****Definition/  
cut-off value**

Birth at less than or equal to 37 weeks gestation (infants and children less than 24 months old).

**Note:** See “Guidelines for Growth Charts and Gestational Age Adjustment for Low Birth Weight and Very Low Birth Weight Infants” for more information on the anthropometric assessment and nutritional care of premature infants.

**Participant  
category and  
priority level**

Category	Priority
Infants	I
Children < 24 months old	II

**Justification**

Premature infants may have physical problems that have nutritional implications including immature sucking, swallowing and immature digestion and absorption of carbohydrates and lipids. Premature infants have increased nutrient and caloric needs for rapid growth. Premature infants grow well on breast milk. WIC promotes breastfeeding and provides nutrition education about infant feeding (1).

**References**

Institute of Medicine: WIC Nutrition Risk Criteria: A Scientific Assessment. Washington (DC): National Academy Press; 1996; p. 215.