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## FSU Researcher Creates Mask to Reduce Pre-term Labor

Morgan Moore Updated Jun 23, 2016



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**TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (WTXL)** -- One out of every 10 babies is born premature, that's according to the latest figures from the CDC.

Now, researchers at FSU are testing a simple device they hope will reduce that number.

"There's really been very little progress in 40 years with how to stop preterm labor," said Dr. James Olcese, associate professor at FSU Biomedical Sciences department.

But that could be about to change, thanks to Dr. Olcese and his team at Florida State University.

They've spent the last several years researching why most women go into labor at night.

"I became intrigued by what the mechanisms are in the brain that determine the timing of labor," said Dr. Olcese.

Enter melatonin.

That's a hormone our bodies produce to help us sleep.

Well, Dr. Olcese says melatonin can also cause contractions.

"If melatonin secreted at night is causing the contractions at night by inhibiting melatonin with light we should inhibit contractions. People thought I was crazy, but I thought let's do it we have to see."

A trial run with lamps showed his findings were right.

Blue light can reduce -- and in some cases stop -- contractions by lowering a woman's melatonin levels.

But the team isn't expecting you to spend every night in a bright room.

Instead they created a simple mask, letting pregnant women get some sleep and leave pre-term labor behind.

"Just bright enough to pass through the closed eyelids. but not enough to startle the woman. It's more personal. Your partner's not going to be awakened every time the mask lights up. It's comfortable and it's very affordable," said Dr. Olcese.

Dr. Olcese says right now, most treatments for early labor are medicines with strong side-effects, and they only postpone contractions for a few days.

He hopes his sleep mask offers a more natural treatment, and a long-term solution for moms-to-be in need.

"I'm pretty sure we're going to have a hit," said Dr. Olcese.

Dr. Olcese is now working to get the mask approved by the FDA.

He hopes to have it on the market by next summer.

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