

# Argus Leader

SIOUX FALLS, SOUTH DAKOTA

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Frank Robertson/ Argus Leader  
David and Sarah Bartels hold their 87-day-old daughter, Stephanie. Sarah is carrying Stephanie's twin, who will likely be born today.

## 88-day-old girl awaits the expected birth today of her twin

Lengthy interval nears world record status

By JOYCE TERVEEN  
Argus Leader Staff

Three-month-old Stephanie Bartels is expecting a twin baby brother or sister any day now.

At 23 weeks into her pregnancy, Sarah Bartels, 23, of Hull, Iowa, went into premature labor. Stephanie was born Jan. 5 at Sioux Valley Hospital, fighting for life at 1 pound, 2 ounces.

While doctors were unable to stop Stephanie's birth, they have been successful in holding off the second birth.

The world record for what's called a delayed-interval delivery

is 92 days. Bartels is on day 88.

Her home since Stephanie's birth has been a hospital room. But those days have been bearable, she said, because she can go to the intensive-care nursery to help care for 4½-pound Stephanie.

"When I first saw Stephanie, she was skin and bones. Now she's really a little chunk," said Bartels as she rested in her the hospital bed Tuesday.

Babies born at 23 weeks are on the statistical edge of life, with one out of five making it. Forty weeks is considered full term.

"I remember that delivery vividly," said Dr. Martin Vincent, the neonatologist who was working the night Stephanie was born. "The baby came out small and yet very

vigorous, wiggling her arms."

The Bartels say it was difficult not being able to hold their first-born for the first six weeks while she was on a ventilator.

"The first time I held her, it made me feel like a natural dad," said David Bartels, a draftsman for an electrical engineering firm in Sioux Center, Iowa. "Before, she didn't feel like she was mine."

Stephanie is doing well and gaining weight. So is the second twin, who is estimated to weigh 7 pounds, 13 ounces.

"Since it was at the extreme of life, we tried to do what we could to keep the second baby inside," said Dr. William J. Watson, a perinatologist who handled Sarah's case because her diabetes

made her a high-risk patient. "We've tried this a number of times and have been unsuccessful."

To delay the second birth, Watson stitched Bartels' cervix to keep it closed. She was given antibiotics to fight off the infection that had infected the membrane of the first twin. She also took medications to prevent contractions.

The Bartels don't care if they break any records.

"I just want to have my baby and go home," Bartels said.

They haven't worried yet about dealing with the question, "Why are we twins and born three months apart?"

"We're just hoping the kids won't ask us that," Bartels said.

## 3-month-old twin's little sister finally arrives

But newborn outweighs sibling by three pounds

By JOYCE TERVEEN  
Argus Leader Staff

Three-month-old Stephanie Bartels has a big little twin sister.

Sandra Bartels was born at 5:46 p.m. Wednesday, 88 days later and 3 pounds heavier than her twin sister, who was born Jan. 5 at Sioux Valley Hospital.

Big sister Stephanie, weighing 4 pounds, 10 ounces, and Sandra, 7 pounds, 10 ounces, slept soundly Thursday in the arms of parents David and Sarah Bartels of Hull, Iowa.

"I saw the top of Sandra's head and I thought 'Holy cow, it's huge,'" said Sarah Bartels, whose second daughter was delivered by Cesarean section.

Stephanie was born 23 weeks into Bartels' pregnancy, the statistical edge of survivability. She weighed 1 pound, 2 ounces and is still hospitalized in the extended-care nursery of the neonatal intensive care unit.

Doctors were able to hold off the birth of Sandra in what's called a delayed-interval delivery. The world record for such a birth is 92 days.

"I felt joy and happiness that she was finally here," said Bar-



Frank Robertson/ Argus Leader  
Sarah and David Bartels hold reunited twin daughters Stephanie (left) and Sandra 88 days after Stephanie was born 17 weeks prematurely. "I felt joy and happiness that she was finally here," Sarah said after Sandra was born Wednesday.

tels, who has been hospitalized since Stephanie's birth. "We'd been waiting for three months."

The second delivery was much different for the couple, both age 23.

"There was probably about as

many people there," David Bartels said. "But it was more relaxed. The radio was playing. They knew what to expect."

Outside Bartels' hospital room, perinatologist Dr. William J. Watson talked about the relief of seeing the couple with two daughters.

"They had so much invested, you just naturally worry about something bad happening," Watson said.

The parents aren't sure if the twins are identical. When asked if they look alike, David Bartels glanced at dark haired Sandra and lighter brown haired Stephanie.

"The noses might be kind of alike," he said. "But I don't know, all babies' noses and mouths are kind of alike."

The Bartels aren't sure how soon their daughters can go home. The family has insurance for their long hospital stay.

The couple said they're getting ready for a life with two babies. They need to start looking for clothes and baby furniture.

The Bartels said they aren't sorry they missed the world record for delayed-interval delivery.

"We're just happy we have two healthy babies," David Bartels said.