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Walking together to support premmie babies

Family keen to help others

Ashleigh Howarth
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A REDBANK Plains family that had two daughters arrive into this world prematurely will be taking part in the upcoming Walk for Prems event in Brisbane.

On Sunday, October 28, Rachael Turner, husband Ben and daughters Ruby and Zoe, will join thousands of other families across the country to walk together in support of the 48,000 premature or sick babies born in Australia every year.

Now in its ninth year, Walk for Prems raises money for the Life's Little Treasure Foundation, a charity dedicated to supporting the families of babies born sick or prior to 37 weeks' gestation.

The event has raised more than \$1.4 million so far and

this year the foundation hopes to raise \$300,000.

Both Ruby and Zoe surprised their parents by arriving three months early.

"Ruby was born at 28 weeks' gestation and Zoe was born at 29 weeks' gestation," Mrs Turner said.

"Ruby came all of a sudden, with no warning whatsoever. Between here and the Mater, I was having contractions every two minutes.

"I was dilated while I was in the car and when we arrived, the doctor took one look and said 'she's coming right now'.

Ruby weighed 1030g at birth but dropped down to 860g. When she was born, Ruby had to be resuscitated and placed on a ventilator straight away.

Her parents weren't able to hold her for the first two weeks due to her fragility and her tiny body could fit in their hands.

Due to her small size, she was fed by a nasogastric tube for the first two months of her life and required oxygen to help her live.

She was discharged from hospital three months later on her due date.

Now a sprightly 18-month-old, Ruby only came off full-time oxygen two months ago.

Little sister Zoe, now seven months, also had a hard start to life.

"Zoe actually tried to come at 23 weeks. I had to

keep having injections to stop the labour and steroids to help make her lungs bigger," Mrs Turner said.

"We kept stopping her but at 29 weeks there was no stopping Zoe."

"She weighed 1260g at birth.

"After being born she went downhill. Her lungs collapsed and drains were put in to release the fluid.

"She was diagnosed with pulmonary interstitial emphysema, pneumothorax, patent ductus arteriosus, as well as chronic neonatal lung disease, like Ruby had too.

"She was put into an induced coma for two weeks due to pain and to help her heal. It was touch and go during that time.

"We weren't able to hold or touch her for four weeks.

"It was hard, you just want to hold your baby and for them to be well.



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“We brought Zoe home from hospital after two-and-a-half months. It was great to be able to finally start our lives together as a family all at home together.

“Zoe was brought home on oxygen too. We have just started to wean her off the oxygen.”

This will be the second time the family will participate in the Walk for Prems event.

“It’s nice to be around other parents who have been through what we have been through,” Mrs Turner said.

“At the walk, you don’t have people who stop and stare and ask ‘what is going on there?’

“It’s safe and it’s a good place where you can talk and people understand what you have been through.”

 **It's safe and it's a good place where you can talk and people understand what you have been through.**

— Rachael Turner

FAST FACTS

- Walk for Prems will be held at Arthur Davis Park, Flinders Pde, Sandgate on Sunday, October 28 at 9am
- Cost is \$27 for adults, \$15 children, \$8 babies
- Register online at www.walkforprems.org.au



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SHOWING SUPPORT: Ben and Rachael Turner and their daughters Ruby and Zoe will take part in the upcoming Walk for Prems event on October 28.

PHOTO: CORDELL RICHARDSON





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**Zoe was born at 29 weeks
gestation, weighing 1260g.**



Ruby was born at 28 weeks gestation, weighing just 1030g.