



The Dudley Group
NHS Foundation Trust

Multiple Pregnancy

Maternity

Patient Information Leaflet

Introduction

Finding out you are expecting two or more babies can be a big shock so don't be surprised if this is how you feel! Although twins are special, they are not rare. In recent years fertility treatments and the fact that women are having babies later have made multiple births more common with about 1 in every 65 births in the UK being twins, triplets or more. This is a big increase from 1984, when 1 in every 100 births was a multiple birth.

There are two types of twins, 1/3 of all twins will be identical and 2/3 non-identical.

1. Identical (or monozygotic)

These twins come from a single fertilised egg. The egg divides in two, creating identical twins who share the same genes. Identical twins are always the same sex, so if your twins are identical, you'll have two girls or two boys and they'll look very alike. Identical babies can also occur within a higher multiple pregnancy, for example, triplets.

2. Non-identical (or dizygotic)

These are the more common form of twins and they occur when two fertilised eggs implant into a woman's womb (uterus). They are no more alike than any other siblings and can be different sexes. Non-identical twins are more common in women over 35 and in those who have had fertility treatment.

There are six types of triplets:

1. Trichorionic triplets

Each baby has a separate placenta and amniotic sac.

2. Dichorionic triamniotic triplets

One baby has a separate placenta and two of the babies share a placenta.

All three babies have separate amniotic sacs.

3. Dichorionic diamniotic triplets

One baby has a separate placenta and amniotic sac and two of the babies share a placenta and amniotic sac.

4. Monochorionic triamniotic triplets

All three babies share one placenta but each has its own amniotic sac.

5. Monochorionic diamniotic triplets

All three babies share one placenta. One baby has a separate amniotic

sac and two babies share one sac.

6. Monochorionic monoamniotic triplets

All three babies share a placenta and amniotic sac.

Healthy eating with a multiple pregnancy

Expecting two or more babies doesn't mean you have to eat significantly more than during a single pregnancy. However, it's normal to put on more weight than a woman who is only carrying one baby.

Aim to eat a healthy, balanced diet that includes plenty of fruit, vegetables and wholegrains. These will help you avoid constipation and provide a range of vitamins and minerals. You also need some protein foods, such as lean red meat, well-cooked eggs, and nuts

and seeds. Dairy foods such as milk, cheese and yoghurt are important for calcium.

You're more at risk from anaemia during a twin pregnancy. You'll be offered extra blood tests and may be offered iron supplements. Good sources of iron include lean red meat, leafy green vegetables, beans and fortified breakfast cereals.

Common pregnancy health worries with twins

It's not necessarily true that you will have more morning sickness if you're expecting twins. Although some women expecting twins or more report lots of morning sickness, others don't experience any. If you do experience morning sickness, you may find it helps to eat little and often, and to avoid getting hungry.

You're more likely to experience piles and varicose veins during a multiple pregnancy because of the weight of your babies pressing on the blood vessels of the pelvic area. Pressure from your womb (uterus) pushing on your stomach may make you more prone to heartburn and indigestion as well.

You may also find you have backache and pelvic pain, particularly later in your pregnancy. Speak to your midwife who may refer you to an obstetric physiotherapist.

Doing pelvic floor exercises regularly will help your pelvic floor get back to normal after your babies are born. Even if you've had a caesarean birth, your pelvic muscles can still be weak from your pregnancy.

How will my pregnancy be managed?

All women with multiple pregnancies will be offered more frequent scans to monitor the growth and wellbeing of the babies. The frequency of scans will depend on the type of twins you are having. Your care will be led by a consultant obstetrician (doctor who specialises in pregnancy).

What problems can occur during multiple pregnancy?

Make sure you go to all your antenatal appointments so any problems can be picked up early and treated if necessary. Twins and triplets have a higher risk of being born prematurely (before 37 weeks) and having a low birth weight of under 2.5kg (5.5lb). Triplets have a 94% chance of being born prematurely and of having a low birth weight.

Being premature increases the risk of problems after birth, such as breathing difficulties. Your obstetric team will work closely with you throughout your pregnancy and after your babies are born to help make sure you and your babies are safe and healthy.

Multiple pregnancies also have a slightly higher risk of:

- Premature labour (labour that starts before 37 weeks) so it is therefore advisable to attend antenatal classes earlier
- Vaginal bleeding before labour
- Raised blood pressure
- Diabetes in pregnancy
- Pre-eclampsia (a condition related to high blood pressure and protein in your urine)

What choices do I have during birth?

You will usually decide how you want to give birth together with your Obstetrician in the antenatal period, and this will depend on the position of your babies and how your pregnancy has been. Lots of women think they have to have a caesarean section with twins. In fact, more than 40% of all twins are born vaginally and the process is similar to that of a single baby. 59% of multiple births are delivered by planned caesarean section nationally.

Can I breastfeed twins/triplets?

It is possible to breastfeed twins or triplets if you wish to and many women manage this very successfully. The midwives and breast feeding support workers will give you advice and support about this throughout your pregnancy and postnatal period.

Where can I find out more?

The following websites have more information on multiple pregnancy:

- NHS Choices - <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pages/giving-birth-to-twins>
- National Childbirth Trust - <http://www.nct.org.uk/birth/multiple-births>
- Twins and Multiple Births Association - <http://www.tamba.org.uk/home>
- Twinsclub - <https://www.twinsclub.co.uk>
- Multiple Births Foundation - <http://www.multiplebirths.org.uk>

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please contact:

Antenatal Clinic

Russells Hall Hospital switchboard number: 01384 456111

This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:

<http://dudleygroup.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email dgft.patient.information@nhs.net

This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.

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此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

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Aceasta broșura poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru va rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

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