



# Multiple Pregnancy

## *What You Should Know*

The human body is designed to ideally carry one baby at a time. But sometimes parents are blessed with more than one. Fertility drugs and treatments increase your chances of having a multiple pregnancy. But often the news comes as a total shock. Your feelings of apprehension about labor and caring for a newborn may be increased and all your expectations may need adjusting.

### **How Multiple Babies are Conceived**

Most multiple births occur when the mother releases more than one egg, each of which are fertilized by different sperm. Each egg implants in the uterus and develops separately, as in fraternal twins. Identical babies occur when a single fertilized egg divides, producing multiple babies with the same inherited traits.

### **Multiple Pregnancy Facts**

- One in 26 of all women not treated with fertility drugs gives birth to twins.
- As many as 40 percent of women treated with fertility therapy have twins or triplets.
- The odds of having triplets without fertility treatment are one in 7,000.
- The odds of conceiving more than three children at once without medical intervention are unknown.
- As many as seven babies have survived pregnancy and delivery, but this is unusual.
- A fraternal twin is twice as likely to give birth to twins as are other women.
- The birth of fraternal twins often skips a generation.

### **Multiple Pregnancy Risks**

- iron deficiency leading to anemia in the mother
- high blood pressure which can lead to toxemia in the mother
- preterm labor; premature birth
- higher risk of birth defects, stillbirth and infant mortality
- low birth weight

### **Take Care**

The extra demand of having more than one baby growing inside you usually means getting extra rest and relaxation. You'll have to pay even more careful attention to your diet and exercise than is necessary in a single pregnancy in order to compensate for the needs of additional babies and your increased size. Your healthcare provider will probably insist that you give birth in a hospital because of the higher risk of complications.