

# Twins And More

## *How did this happen?*

Multiple gestation happens more often than you might expect. Multiple gestation or multiple birth are terms that mean more than one baby is born to a mother. Here are some facts:

- One in every 30 births in the U.S. is twins. One in every 618 births in the U.S. is three or more babies.<sup>1</sup>
- About one-third of all twins are identical (same sex, same physical features, similar IQs and personalities).
- Identical twins develop when a single egg, fertilized by a single sperm, divides to produce two separate, but identical, eggs. If one of the eggs divides once more, identical triplets will result.
- About two-thirds of all twins are fraternal (same or opposite sex, look and act no more alike than siblings would).
- Fraternal twins develop when the mother produces two eggs instead of one during her normal cycle, and the eggs are fertilized by two separate sperm.
- Some women are naturally more likely to produce more than one egg each month and therefore, more likely to give birth to fraternal twins (or more).
- One-third of twins, three-fourths of triplets, and nearly all quadruplets or other higher order multiples (five or more babies) are the result of infertility treatments.

**One in every 30 births  
in the U.S. is twins.**

## Obstetrical Homecare

Your doctor may prescribe the Alere® Multiple Gestation Program. Nurses, pharmacists, and dietitians with experience in caring for women pregnant with multiples will help you learn to recognize signs and symptoms of preterm labor and other conditions that may complicate your pregnancy. This comprehensive program allows Alere, with your help, to watch for early signs and symptoms and to notify your doctor of any change in your condition.

**For more information, contact  
your physician or call Alere at  
800-950-3963**

## Twins And More

*The facts you  
need to know*



**Alere®**

*Women's & Children's Health*

**Alere®**

*Women's & Children's Health*

© 2008 Inverness Medical. All rights reserved. Alere is a trademark of the Inverness Medical group of companies.  
GCA 00186 10/08

## Will my prenatal care be different?

As with any pregnancy, getting proper care is the key to promoting the health of both you and your babies. When you are carrying multiples your pregnancy requirements go beyond what is standard for a woman carrying one baby. At each office visit, your blood pressure, weight, and urine will be checked. The doctor or nurse will listen to each of the babies' heartbeats. At about four months gestation, the height of your uterus will be measured to track the babies' growth. Your doctor may order tests during your pregnancy that will give more information on the status of your health as well as that of your babies. Some common tests include:

- **Triple Screen** | A screening test done on the mother's blood,
- **Ultrasound** | A test that uses sound waves to show "pictures" of the babies, the amniotic fluid, the membranes, and placentas,
- **Transvaginal Ultrasound** | A test to detect the risk of premature labor and delivery by measuring your cervix,
- **Amniocentesis** | A test done early in pregnancy to detect genetic problems or birth defects. It may be done late in pregnancy to see if the babies' lungs are mature enough for them to breathe on their own,
- **Chorionic Villus Sampling** | A test to detect genetic disorders,
- **Screening for Group B Strep** | A test to see if the mother is a carrier of group B streptococcus (GBS), an infection that may cause serious complications for the baby,
- **Glucose Challenge Test** | A test to detect gestational diabetes, a condition in which the body does not process sugar in food properly,
- **Non-Stress Test** | A test that uses a monitor to watch the babies' heart rates, movements, and any uterine contractions,
- **Biophysical Profile** | A test that uses ultrasound and monitoring to evaluate the wellbeing of each baby.

## How much weight should I gain?

The amount of weight you will need to gain depends on how many babies you are carrying and your height and weight before you got pregnant. Here are some general guidelines for weight gain in a multiple pregnancy:

- Twins – 40 to 50 pounds,
- Triplets – 50 to 60 pounds,
- Quadruplets – 65 to 80 pounds,
- Gain at a steady rate with about half the weight before 24 weeks' gestation:
  - Early weight gain has more influence on the babies' growth.
  - It may be harder to gain weight as pregnancy progresses because as babies get bigger there is less room for your stomach to expand and you feel full before eating enough.

## What should I eat?

- Three meals and four substantial snacks (mini meals).
- Schedule snacks for mid-morning, mid-afternoon, after dinner, and before bed.
- Eat about every two hours.
- Eat iron-rich proteins (red meat) twice per day to protect yourself from anemia.
- Take multivitamin and mineral pills as prescribed by your doctor.
- Drink at least eight glasses of water per day.
- Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and raw fish, raw meats, or raw poultry.
- As recommended by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), do not eat shark, swordfish, king mackerel, or tile fish, as these fish have much higher levels of mercury than other commonly consumed fish.
- Limit coffee and caffeinated drinks to 1 or 2 cups per day.
- Do not take prescription medicine, over-the-counter medicines, or "home remedies" without checking with your doctor to be sure they are safe during your pregnancy.

## Will I carry my babies full term?

Multiple pregnancies have a higher rate of premature labor and delivery. You can lower your risk by getting proper prenatal care, eating a balanced diet, getting plenty of rest, and promptly reporting any problems. The following are common signs of preterm labor. Some, such as backache, can occur as a normal part of pregnancy. However, if you notice a change in what feels normal for you, please notify your doctor or nurse.

- Uterine contractions
- Menstrual-like cramps
- Low, dull backache
- Pelvic or thigh pressure
- Intestinal cramps
- Change in vaginal discharge
- General feeling that "something isn't right"

Noticing the early signs of preterm labor can help you get appropriate and timely treatment for stopping your contractions so your pregnancy can continue until the babies are fully developed. Generally, the longer the babies stay in their natural incubator (their mother), the better their chances for a healthy start. Extra time helps their heart and lungs develop, ensuring long-term health. It's especially important in multiple gestation pregnancies for there's a greater chance of early delivery.

## Am I at risk for other problems?

A multiple pregnancy is a high-risk pregnancy. You will have a greater chance of developing complications than if you were pregnant with one baby. Talk with your doctor to learn the warning signs that indicate possible complications. Keep all of your appointments, as your doctor will want to check frequently on your health status and the growth, development and health of your babies. Also, about one-half of twins, and nearly all triplets and higher-order multiples, are born by scheduled cesarean birth (C-section).