



## Twins (Non-Identical/fraternal)

Māhanga

Masaga

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Information for Pregnant Women and  
Whaanau

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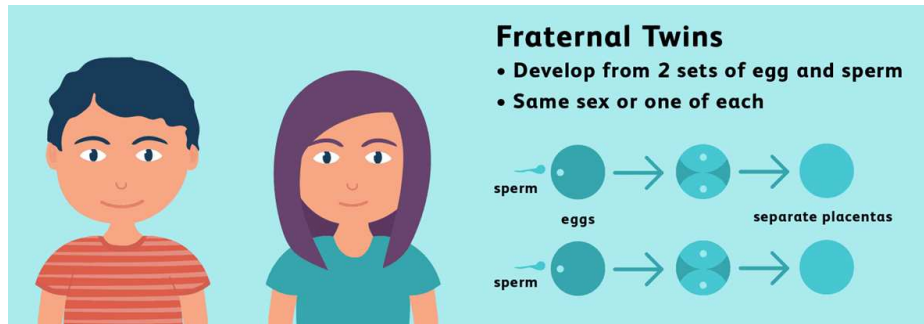


## Congratulations, you're having twins!

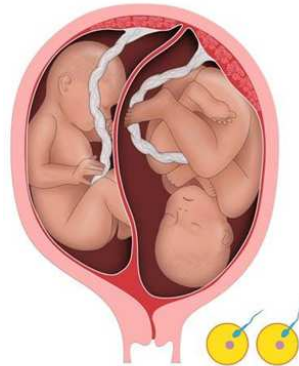
### What kind of twins?

Twins occur approximately once in every 60-70 pregnancies in New Zealand. There are two "types" of twins:

- 75% will be **fraternal or non-identical**. These twins result from the mother producing two eggs which are fertilized by two separate sperm. These twins may both be boys, or girls, or one of each!



- They are siblings who share their mother's uterus (womb), as they grow. They generally have separate placentas and separate sacs.
- These twins can run in families.



- The other 25% of twins will be **"identical" twins**. These twins result from one egg and one sperm that would usually make one baby, splitting into two very early on. (Approximately 1 in 200 pregnancies will be identical twins).

There are numerous "Multiple Birth" clubs organised by other mothers with twins (or triplets) and these clubs have regular newsletters and twin playgroups; they also offer support and advice for new twin mothers.

Many have equipment that can be hired at very reasonable rates.

### Resources:

New Zealand Multiple Birth Association (NZMBA)

[www.multiples.org.nz](http://www.multiples.org.nz)

Auckland Central Multiple Birth Club

[www.multiples-ac.org.nz](http://www.multiples-ac.org.nz)

Counties Manukau Multiple Birth Club

[www.multiplescm.org](http://www.multiplescm.org)

[www.lalecheleague.co.nz](http://www.lalecheleague.co.nz) (Breastfeeding multiples)

[www.workandincome.govt.nz](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz) (Multiple Birth Home Help Payment)

[www.kiwiparent.co.nz](http://www.kiwiparent.co.nz) (Parenting and childbirth education)

[www.familyservices.govt.nz](http://www.familyservices.govt.nz) (Parenting)

[www.maternity.org.nz](http://www.maternity.org.nz) (Maternity information)

[www.ird.govt.nz](http://www.ird.govt.nz) (Working for families tax credits)

[www.nsu.govt.nz](http://www.nsu.govt.nz) (Screening information)

If the leading twin is not head-first or one/both twins are unwell, it may be necessary to have the twins by Caesarian Section.

## After the Birth

Twins are more likely to need some extra care when they are first born.

They may need to go to the Neonatal Unit for a period of time for extra monitoring or support. This can vary depending on their gestation (how many weeks pregnant you were) and how healthy they are when they are born.

You will probably need to be in hospital for a little longer than with a single baby.

If your babies are born very early and need weeks of hospital care, you will go home while the babies stay in the Neonatal Unit.

In this situation you are encouraged to spend as much time as you can with your babies in the unit and can visit whenever you wish.

Looking after twins is a lot of work; mothers (and fathers) need lots of help and support from family and friends when they get home.

Breastfeeding is encouraged and many twins are fully breastfed so ask for advice and assistance, especially if you have not breastfed before.

If you have another child at home under the age of five you will be eligible for extra assistance at home in the first 12 months. (Work and Income Multiple Birth Home Help payments).

Visit [www.smartstart.services.govt.nz](http://www.smartstart.services.govt.nz) for information on financial help in pregnancy.

- This is a random event and does not usually run in families.
- These identical twins are also defined into different types depending on **when** the split occurs.

## Screening

Having twins does mean there is an increased risk that one (or possibly both) babies can have an abnormality or medical problem.

This risk is greater if they are identical.

Most twins will be born healthy. Antenatal screening and testing for Down Syndrome and other conditions in pregnancy is offered to all women.

See [www.nsu.govt.nz](http://www.nsu.govt.nz) and speak to your Lead Maternity Carer (LMC)/ Community Midwife (CMW) about your options.

- First trimester screening involves a scan and blood test done between 9 and 13 weeks and 6 days (there may be a part-charge for the scan)
- Second trimester screening is a blood test done between 14-20 weeks
- Non-Invasive Prenatal Testing (NIPT) is a blood test done after 10 weeks. This screening however, is not funded/free.

We do encourage women to have screening done as it can give more information about the babies and help in planning the best pregnancy care for you.

## Diet and Supplements

All women who want to have a baby need to eat well, be active and stop smoking or drinking alcohol. We advise:

- Regular meals
- Water, not sugary drinks
- Less takeaways/ fat/sugar/salt

Twin pregnancies are particularly demanding because there are two babies. Women with twins need extra Folic Acid and will be prescribed a 5mg tablet daily.

An iodine supplement is also recommended in pregnancy to help babies brains develop normally, (except for women with an overactive thyroid).

Low iron levels are common and during pregnancy you need to take extra iron both for yourself and to help the babies' development. Your LMC/CMW will be able to advise you.

## Care during Pregnancy

All twin pregnancies have an increased risk of pregnancy problems:

- Severe 'morning' sickness (hyperemesis)
- Preterm (early) labour
- High blood pressure
- Pre-eclampsia (also known as PET or toxaemia) a pregnancy problem that can cause serious issues for both mothers and babies
- Diabetes in Pregnancy
- Growth problems (one or both babies not growing well)

Your LMC/CMW will talk to you about these issues and let you know the signs and symptoms to watch for.

Remember, if anything occurs that seems abnormal or concerns you, please contact your midwife, Family Doctor, or the hospital.

All twin pregnancies will have some input from an Obstetrician (pregnancy specialist). However, most will progress normally with just a little extra care/monitoring.

It is particularly important to have regular antenatal visits with your

midwife or doctor.

Because it is more difficult to check how the babies are growing when you are having twins, you will need extra scans; every 4 weeks from 28 weeks (more frequently if there are concerns).

These scans detect if one or both twins are not growing as well as they should.

The most common problem with a twin pregnancy is going into labour early (i.e. before 37 weeks).

This is because your uterus (womb) is stretching earlier with two babies.

All women are asked to watch for signs of labour (like regular cramp-like pains or lower back pain that comes and goes).

Urine infections are more common in pregnancy and can also trigger preterm labour. We recommend regular urine tests to check for infection and that any infection is treated quickly.

## Labour and Birth

Twins are generally regarded as full term at 37 weeks, with birth recommended before 38 weeks (with one baby 40 weeks is full term).

If you develop pregnancy problems or the babies are not growing well, your twins may need to be born earlier than this.

If the "leading" (lower) twin is coming head-first and both babies are healthy, the best option, usually, is for labour and a vaginal birth.

There is a greater chance you will need an "induction of labour" if you are carrying twins. This is where you come into hospital and we use various methods to get labour to start.

Both babies will have their heartbeats continuously monitored during the labour and there will be more medical staff involved than if you were only having one baby.