

Twins (Identical) Māhanga Masaga Mâhanga



Information for Pregnant Women and
Whaanau

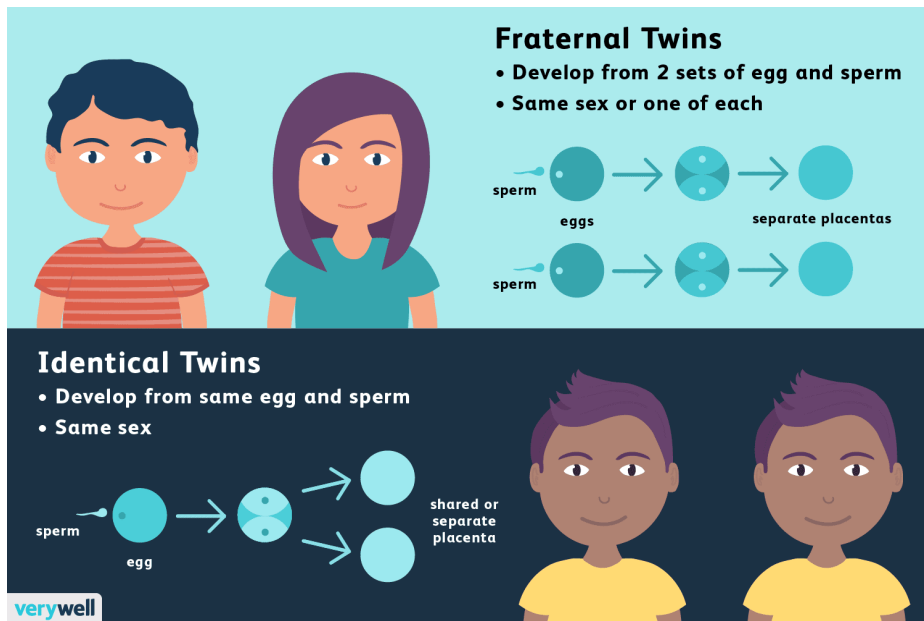
 <p>COUNTIES MANUKAU HEALTH</p>	Department: Women's Health	Updated: March 2020
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Congratulations, you're having twins!

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).

www.workandincome.govt.nz (Multiple Birth Home Help Payment)

www.kiwiparent.co.nz (Parenting and childbirth education)

www.familyservices.govt.nz (Parenting)

www.maternity.org.nz (Maternity information)

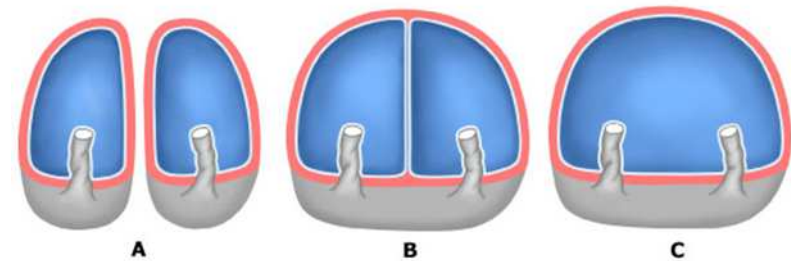
www.ird.govt.nz (Working for families tax credits)

www.nsu.govt.nz (Screening information)

www.smartstart.services.govt.nz (financial aid)

- 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.



Picture A.

These identical twins are further defined by **when** the split happened. If the fertilised egg splits into two before Day 4 there will be two separate placentas and two separate sacs, just like fraternal twins.

Picture B.

If the split occurs Day 4-8, there will be one placenta and one chorion (outside membrane), but two amnions (inner membranes). This is like having one tent with two sleeping bags inside.

Picture C.

If the split occurs Day 8-12, the twins will share a sleeping bag as well! (One amnion, one chorion, one placenta). If the split occurs after Day 12 which is very rare, they will be conjoined twins (sharing body parts).

Having an early scan (before 12 weeks), will identify what sort of twins you are carrying and helps for planning your pregnancy care.

Screening

Having twins means there is an increased risk that one or both babies can have an abnormality or medical problem.

- This risk is 3-5 times greater when they are identical.

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

See www.nsu.govt.nz and/or discuss with your LMC (Lead Maternity Carer)/CMW (Community Midwife).

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

First trimester screening can help identify those twins who may later develop TTTs (Twin-to-twin transfusion syndrome) and is the preferred option if you are having twins.

- First trimester screening is done between 9 – 13 weeks plus 6 days and involves a scan and blood test. (The scan has a part-charge)
- Second Trimester Screening involves a blood test done between 14 and 20 weeks.
- Non-Invasive Prenatal Testing (NIPT) – this is a blood test and can be done at any time after 10 weeks but is not funded (has a cost)

Diet and Supplements

All women having a baby (or planning to) 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

To find out about financial help in pregnancy visit www.smartstart.services.govt.nz

There are numerous “Multiple Birth” clubs organised by other mothers with twins (or triplets/quads) and these clubs have regular newsletters and twin get-togethers for play; they also offer support and advice for new twin mothers.

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

**This pamphlet is by no means a complete guide to twin pregnancy!
It is hopefully a starting point – please seek further information from your LMC/Community Midwife.**

Resources

New Zealand Multiple Birth Association (NZMBA)

www.multiples.org.nz

Auckland Central Multiple Birth Club

www.multiples-ac.org.nz

Counties Manukau Multiple Birth Club

www.multiplescm.org

www.la lecheleague.co.nz (Breastfeeding multiples)

This is where you come into hospital and we get labour to start by various methods before natural labour occurs.

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.

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 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 and can visit whenever you want.

Looking after twins is a lot of work and 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 under the age of five you will be eligible for extra help at home in the first year (Multiple Birth Home Help payments).

Twin pregnancies are particularly demanding because there are two babies.

- All women are encouraged to take Folic Acid prior to pregnancy and until at least 12 weeks. Women carrying twins need extra - a 5mg tablet every day.

Neurokare/Neurotabs is an iodine supplement also recommended in pregnancy. This helps babies' brains to develop normally, (except for women who have an overactive thyroid).

Low iron levels are common in women and during pregnancy you will need to take extra iron both for yourself and to help baby's development.

Your LMC/CMW will be able to advise you.

Care During Pregnancy

All twin pregnancies will have some input from an Obstetrician (pregnancy specialist), identical twins may need specialist supervision more often.

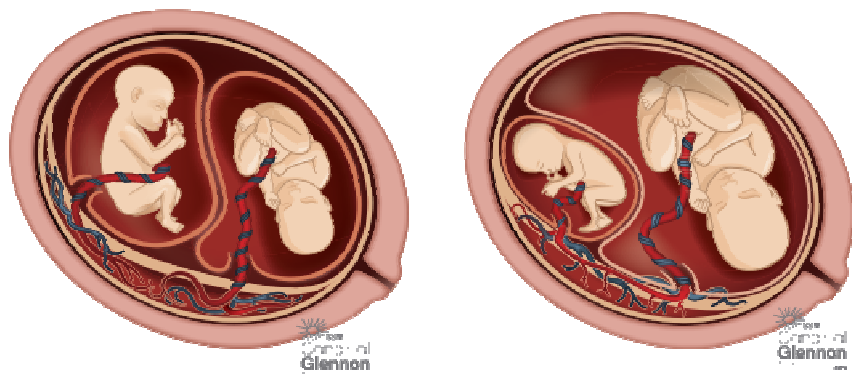
It is particularly important to have regular antenatal visits with your midwife or doctor as all multiple pregnancies have an increased risk of pregnancy problems:

- Severe 'morning' sickness (hyperemesis)
- Preterm (early) labour
- High blood pressure
- Pre-eclampsia (also known as PET or toxemia) – a pregnancy problem that can affect both mother and babies.
Severe headaches, nausea/vomiting, or facial swelling can be signs and need to be reported immediately
- Diabetes in Pregnancy
- Growth problems (one or both babies not growing well)

Twins who share a placenta carry the added risk of "Twin-to-Twin Transfusion Syndrome" (TTTS).

This involves blood vessels in the single placenta shunting an unbalanced amount of blood/nutrients toward one twin and away from the other – this puts both twins at risk.

Usually, the first symptom is an increase in fluid around one baby – so, if your tummy starts feeling tight and uncomfortable, especially if it happens quickly, you must let your LMC/CMW know and you will need a scan to check the fluid.



Healthy Twins

Tightness can develop within a matter of days. There is treatment available for TTTS as long as it is picked up early. TTTS affects 10-15% of identical twins.

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 LMC/CMW, Family Doctor, or the hospital.

Scans

Because of the risk of TTTs and the difficulty in checking how well the babies are growing, you should have a growth scan every two weeks from 16 weeks.

Routine scans can be done at a community facility, but if there are any problems, you should be referred to a Specialist.

There is usually a part-charge for any scan done in the community.

Premature Labour

The most common problem with any twins 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 (discuss this with your LMC/CMW). Urine infections are more common in pregnancy. We recommend regular urine tests to check for infection and that any infection is treated quickly.

Labour and Birth

It is internationally agreed that the best time to deliver identical twins is by 37 weeks. This is because the complications for these twins can increase after this time.

If you develop pregnancy problems or the babies are not growing well, the 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 much greater chance that you will need an “induction of labour” if you are carrying twins.