

PATIENT INFORMATION

Twins & Multiple Births

INTRODUCTION

Finding out that you are expecting two or more babies can be a surprise. A twin pregnancy occurs once in every 80 pregnancies. However having triplets or even more is rarer.

There are 2 different types of twins:

- Identical Twins. This occurs when one fertilized egg splits into two. These may or may not share the same membrane sac.
- Non-Identical. This occurs when two eggs are fertilized. These always have separate membrane sacs.

A membrane sac is the membranous bag that contains the developing baby.

COMPLICATIONS

Occasionally a twin pregnancy can have more complications than a pregnancy with one baby.

Minor problems such as morning sickness, heartburn, ankle swelling and varicose veins can be exaggerated. Extra weight gained by expecting more than one baby can also increase tiredness and backache.

You also have a slightly increased risk of the following:

- Anaemia
- Pre eclampsia
- Pre term labour
- Twin to twin transfusion

Therefore as your pregnancy will need to be monitored more closely it is recommended that most of your antenatal care is provided at the hospital to ensure that any complications are detected and treated as early as possible.

ANTENATAL CARE

Ultrasound Scans

An ultrasound scan should be performed early in your pregnancy to detect if your twins are likely to be identical or not. If you wish to have a screening test for Down's syndrome you will be offered a Nuchal Translucency scan between 11 – 14 weeks. A routine anomaly scan will also be performed at approximately 20 weeks gestation.

IDENTICAL TWINS

You will be asked to attend the Antenatal clinic at the hospital every 2 weeks from when you are 16 weeks pregnant. Ultrasound scans will also be performed every 2 weeks to check your babies' wellbeing and growth

You will also be reviewed at the Fetal Medicine clinic at the hospital to assess for signs of twin to twin transfusion syndrome. This sometimes occurs if the two placentas are connected so that the babies share the same blood circulation. In this situation one twin might receive more blood than the other and this can cause complications in the growth of the babies.

If you have any signs of this you may be referred to the Regional Twin clinic at Liverpool Women's Hospital

NON-IDENTICAL TWINS

You will be asked to attend the Antenatal clinic at the hospital every 4 weeks from when you are 24 weeks pregnant. Ultrasound scans will be performed every 4 weeks to check your babies' wellbeing and growth.

TIMING AND MODE OF DELIVERY

The risks and benefits of the different modes of delivery will be discussed with you around 32-34 weeks pregnant.

In 60% of twin pregnancies, spontaneous birth will occur before 37 weeks.

Both spontaneous pre-term birth and elective pre-term birth are associated with an increased risk of admission to the neonatal unit.

With identical twins, you will be offered birth from 36 weeks and with non-identical twins from 37 weeks.

Birth at this time does not appear to be associated with increased risk of adverse outcome. However, if pregnancy continues beyond 38 weeks, this increases the risk of fetal death.

If you choose not to have elective birth at the time offered, you will be offered additional visits and monitoring.

The mode of delivery will depend on how well you have been, if you have any complications such as pre eclampsia or if your babies' growth has slowed down. If the baby in the lead is not "head down" you will require a caesarean section.

FOLLOWING DELIVERY

As parents of twins you may need some additional help and support when you go home and if possible you should enlist the help of friends or relatives to assist you with daily chores.

If this help is not readily available you may be able to access 'Home Start' which is a charity organisation which can support you with trained volunteers. Ask your midwife or health visitor if this service is available in your area.

Unfortunately there is no additional NHS help routinely available for families with twins, however if you are having more than 2 babies you may be suitable for support and therefore you should contact your health visitor for further information.

BREASTFEEDING

It is possible to breastfeed twins and many mothers successfully manage. The midwives will give you advice and support. You can be referred to our Infant Feeding Co-ordinator.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you wish to discuss any aspect of this leaflet further or would like additional information, please discuss with your Midwife or Obstetrician.

During your time in hospital, it is important to us that you are happy with your care and treatment. Please speak to a member of staff and/or the ward Sister/Charge Nurse if you have any questions or concerns.

MATRON

A Matron is also available during the hours of 9am – 5 pm Monday to Friday. During these periods, ward staff can contact Matron to arrange to meet with you. Out of hours, a Midwife can be contacted via the ward to deal with any concerns you may have.

INFECTION CONTROL REQUEST

Preventing infections is a crucial part of our patient's care. To ensure that our standards remain high our staff have regular infection prevention and control training and their practice is monitored in the workplace. We ask patients and visitors to assist us in preventing infections by cleaning their hands at regular intervals and informing staff of areas within the hospital that appear soiled.

As a patient there may be times that you are unsure whether a staff member has cleaned their hands; if in doubt please ask the staff member and they will be only too happy to put your mind at ease by cleaning their hands so that you can see them.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR AFTER YOU HAVE LEFT HOSPITAL

If you have any concerns, contact Delivery Suite (01695) 656919

CONTACT INFORMATION IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT YOUR CONDITION AFTER YOU HAVE LEFT HOSPITAL

If you have any queries regarding this information please telephone the relevant numbers from the selection within the leaflet.

OTHER USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS/CONTACTS:

Southport and Ormskirk Hospital Trust – 01704 547471
NHS 111

Stop Smoking Helpline (Sefton) - 0300 100 1000

Stop Smoking Helpline (West Lancashire) - 0800 328 6297

Multiple Births Foundation
mbf@imperial.nhs.uk
Tel No: 0208 3833519

Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecology
www.rcog.org.uk

TAMBA
www.tamba.org.uk

**Please call 01704 704714 if you need
this leaflet in an alternative format**

Southport and Ormskirk Hospital NHS Trust

Ormskirk & District General Hospital
Wigan Road, Ormskirk, L39 2AZ
Tel: (01695) 577111

Southport & Formby District General Hospital
Town Lane, Kew, Southport, PR8 6PN
Tel: (01704) 547471

FOR APPOINTMENTS

Telephone (01695) 656680
Email soh-tr.appointments@nhs.net

Please remember to complete the **attached Friends and Family Test**.
Alternatively, you can complete the *Friends and Family Test* on-line by going to: southportandormskirk.nhs.uk/FFT
Thank you

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Ref: 10/24
Version: 5
Reviewed: October 2021
Next Review: October 2024