

Advanced Reproductive Center

Risk of Multiple Pregnancy with Infertility Treatment

Patient's Name: _____

Partner's Name: _____

Infertility treatment with ovulation stimulation medications carries an increased risk of multiple pregnancies, including twins, triplets and higher order gestations. The chance of multiple pregnancies (typically twins) is approximately 8% with oral medication such as Clomid and Letrozole. This risk increases to 20 to 30% with the use of injectable gonadotropins such as Follistim, Gonal F, Menopur etc. The risk of multiple pregnancy in the general public is around 1%.

The risk of multiple pregnancies is difficult to control with oral and injectable medications because of the uncertainty regarding the number of mature follicles produced as a result of the ovarian stimulation medications. During the ovarian stimulation cycle, response to medication will be monitored with ultrasound and blood work. If the risk of multiple pregnancy is deemed to be too high the cycle will be cancelled. In the case of a cancelled cycle you should avoid unprotected intercourse.

When IVF is the procedure used for assisted reproduction the risk of multiple pregnancy is related to the age of the patient, the number of embryos transferred and embryo quality. If one embryo is transferred the multiple pregnancy rate is 1 to 2%. This is due to the risk of identical twinning (when a single embryo splits in two) which can happen with any type of infertility treatment. If multiple embryos are transferred the risk of multiple pregnancy can be as high as 50% with the majority being twins.

All multiple pregnancies carry increased risks to both the mother and the infant. Risks to the mother include but are not limited to: premature labor, premature delivery, pregnancy loss, maternal hemorrhage, cesarean section, high blood pressure, preeclampsia, gestational diabetes etc. Risks to the infant include: low birth weight, long term developmental disabilities, multiple lifelong health problems and even death. The magnitude of these risks is related to the number of embryos that successfully implant into the uterus. For example the risk of preterm delivery with twins is about 50% while with triplets it is about 92%.

In the case of a multiple pregnancy (usually involving 3 or more fetuses) there is a procedure called selective reduction. This procedure is usually done by an obstetrician and involves reducing the number of fetuses to one or two in an attempt to reduce the risk of a pregnancy loss and preterm delivery. The selective reduction procedure itself has associated risks, including miscarriage of the entire pregnancy. Selective reduction can be a difficult choice for some

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patients. If you do conceive with multiples and wish to consider selective reduction it is best to talk with a physician who specializes in the procedure so that you can fully understand the potential risks and benefits.

I/We have received a copy of *Complications and Problems Associated with Multiple Births*, published by the American Society For Reproductive Medicine

Initial: Patient_____ Partner_____

I/We have considered all the information provided to me/us and have had ample opportunity to ask questions and all my/our questions have been answered to my/our satisfaction. I/We acknowledge the risks of multiple pregnancy resulting from the use of infertility treatment and agree to proceed with this treatment.

Patient signature

Date

Partner signature

Date

Witness signature

Date

Witness printed name



Fact Sheet

From ReproductiveFacts.org



The Patient Education Website of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine

What do I need to worry about with a multiple pregnancy?

Women who take fertility medicines to get pregnant have a higher chance of having more than one fetus in a pregnancy. Fetus is the term for developing humans from 11 weeks of pregnancy until birth. A multiple pregnancy or multiple gestation may have 2 fetuses (twin pregnancy), 3 fetuses (triplet pregnancy), or other (high-order multiple pregnancy). Each added fetus raises the chances of having a risky pregnancy and can be dangerous for both the mom and babies. Early (preterm) birth is one of the most common problems.

What are some problems with having a multiple pregnancy?

Pregnancy loss

The more fetuses there are in the womb, the more likely it is that the pregnancy will end in miscarriage, premature delivery, or stillbirth. Sometimes one or more of the fetuses will no longer be seen with ultrasound, called vanishing twin syndrome. In fact, 1 out of 3 pregnancies with more than one fetus will naturally reduce its number very early in pregnancy.

Problems for the babies

Many problems are linked to the babies being born early (prematurity). Premature babies can have problems with their lungs, stomach, and bowels, and even die. Some require long stays in the neonatal intensive care unit. Prematurity can also cause problems with bleeding in the brain, which can lead to problems with the baby's nervous system and development. Prematurity can cause problems with movement and mental retardation, including cerebral palsy. Some problems may not be noticed until the children are older.

Problems for the mother

The risk of pregnancy complications goes up with each fetus in the womb. Some women can develop high blood pressure in pregnancy, called preeclampsia or toxemia of pregnancy. This can be dangerous and it can cause preterm birth, seizures, and, in extreme cases, death of the mother. Gestational diabetes (problems with high blood sugar) is more likely with a multiple pregnancy. In the early stages of a multiple pregnancy can also have more nausea, vomiting, and constipation than a woman carrying one baby. Problems with bleeding before and after the delivery are also more common.

What can I do if I have a multiple pregnancy?

If you are carrying more than one fetus, talk with your doctor and partner about your options. Multiple pregnancy often means specialized obstetric care, especially for triplet and other high-order multiples. Many complications cannot be prevented, but getting good care is important to reduce your risks. Some women may choose to have a procedure called multifetal pregnancy reduction. This can be used to reduce the number of fetuses to a smaller number to increase the chances of having just one or two healthy child(ren). Women with serious health problems may consider this necessary to make the pregnancy less risky.

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For more information on this and other reproductive health topics, visit www.ReproductiveFacts.org