

Multiple births – background and statistics

THE SCALE OF MULTIPLE BIRTHS

- **1 in 80 births** following natural conception in the UK are multiples
- **1 in 4 births** after IVF in the UK result in either twins or triplets (incl. ICSI)
- **40%** of IVF babies are twins

The numbers of multiple babies has risen significantly:

- In **1995** just over **2600** IVF babies were born as part of a multiple birth
- In **2003** more than **3700** IVF babies were born as part of a multiple birth – a rise of more than 41%

Source HFEA Register

Fertility treatment is thought to be the main factor behind the increasing number of babies born as multiples in the UK

- In **1978**, **11941** babies were born as part of a multiple birth
- In **2003**, **18395** babies were born as part of a multiple birth

Source ONS

RISKS

- **126** IVF babies die each year as a consequence of having been born in a multiple birth
 - of these **51** are stillbirths
 - **42** are deaths in the first week of life
 - **33** are deaths later in the first year of life
 - these figures do not include miscarriage or fetal reduction

Source: Oakley L & Doyle P, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

RISKS (contd) (Source 'One Child at a time' unless otherwise stated)

Risk for babies	Twins	Triplets
Proportion born prematurely with low birthweight	50%	90%
Death in the first week of life	5x higher*	9x higher*
Cerebral palsy	4x higher*	18x higher*
pre-eclampsia (for mothers)	3x higher*	9x higher*

*than for singleton births

- Identical twins have a significantly increased risk of congenital abnormalities

Risk for mothers	Twins	Triplets
pre-eclampsia	3x higher*	9x higher*
diabetes	2 – 3x higher*	
coronary heart disease ⁺	2x higher**	
death from cardiovascular causes ⁺	7 – 11x higher***	

*than for singleton births

**with preterm delivery

***with delivery of low birthweight baby

⁺ Source: Sattar N & Greer I *BMJ* 2002;3255 157-160

- **Risk of death**, although low, is **doubled** for women expecting twins
- Up to 25% of women carrying more than one baby suffer from pregnancy induced **high blood pressure** and are 2-3 times more likely to get diabetes