

ABOUT TWIN BIRTHS

About 2 – 3% of all pregnant women are expecting twins. Twins are at slightly higher risk of problems around the time of labour and birth as compared to single babies. When a twin pregnancy is at term and the first twin is in the head down position, a decision needs to be made as to whether the babies would be best delivered by planning a vaginal birth, or whether a Caesarean section should be undertaken.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS IN DELIVERING TWINS?

Although problems may occur during any labour or vaginal birth, there is some evidence that twin pregnancies near term, have higher rates of complications than pregnancies with only one baby.

These complications might arise because of problems during pregnancy or during birth. Both twins may be at risk but birth complications more often happen for the second twin after the delivery of the first twin. Still, many doctors believe that women giving birth to twins when the first twin is coming head first, may safely give birth vaginally, with only a very low risk of serious problems (less than 5 in 1000 having a significant problem at the time of the birth). As you know, there is a small risk of problems in any labour or birth.

There is medical evidence that the risks to the second twin may be less if the babies are

delivered by planned Caesarean section. This alternative does not guarantee that the babies will be delivered without difficulty however, and may result in unnecessary problems for the mother.

There has been only one study, which has compared planned Caesarean section with planned vaginal birth for the delivery of twins. This study was too small to answer the question of the better approach for delivery. At the present time, there is no reliable evidence to justify either routine Caesarean section or routine vaginal delivery.

WHAT IS THE TWIN BIRTH STUDY?

Because of these uncertainties, physicians in Canada and other countries are taking part in a large study, the Twin Birth Study, to find out which is the better method of delivery for the twin babies (where the first twin is positioned head down). The study will also find out which is the better approach for delivery for the mother.

If you agree to take part in this study your pregnancy must be at or near term and your first baby must lie in a cephalic position (with the first baby's head positioned down). You must have average sized babies and not have any problems indicating the possibility for difficulties at delivery.

The method of delivery will be determined 'by randomisation'. Randomisation means that neither you nor your physician chooses the method of delivery; rather the method is

chosen at random, or by chance. This process of choosing your treatment is very important to be able to answer the question as to which method of delivery is better for you and your babies.

WHAT IS INVOLVED FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE TWIN BIRTH STUDY?

If you are in the vaginal birth group, you will have a vaginal birth unless a problem develops suggesting that Caesarean section would be safer for you and your babies.

If you are in the Caesarean section group, the operation will be planned for when you are close to your due date. If you go into labour before then, a Caesarean section will be undertaken during labour if possible.

Following your delivery, information about you and your babies will be collected. Most of the information will be obtained from medical records. Because the study hopes to answer a number of questions about the benefits and risks of Caesarean section compared to vaginal birth, we will ask you to fill out a questionnaire about your own and your babies' health at about 3 months after your delivery. We will also contact you to find out about your health and your babies' development when they are 24 months old.

HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE TWIN BIRTH STUDY?

You can speak to your own caregiver or you can contact the study investigator or coordinator in your centre who are listed below.

INVESTIGATOR:

COORDINATOR:

For a list of participating centres, please contact tbs@sw.ca

If you choose to participate in this study, you will contribute important information that may help future pregnancies similar to yours. The results of the study may influence the practices of physicians and medicine in countries worldwide.

COUNTRIES PARTICIPATING IN THE TWIN BIRTH STUDY INCLUDE:

Argentina	Hungary
Australia	Israel
Belgium	Jordan
Brazil	Poland
Canada	Romania
Chile	Spain
Croatia	The Netherlands
Denmark	United Kingdom
Egypt	USA
Estonia	

Information for parents and families



If you are pregnant with twins, this international research study may be of interest to you



Maternal, Infant and Reproductive Health Research Unit



CIHR IRSC

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