

Multiple Birth Minimisation strategy

Introduction

At Acorn Fertility, we recommend Single Embryo Transfer (SET) when suitable to avoid multiple gestations. When you try hard to have a child, becoming pregnant with more than one baby may sound tempting. However, there are significant risks associated with a twin pregnancy relative to a singleton pregnancy, which must be considered seriously when deciding treatment options.

What are the risks of having a 'multiple gestation'?

Multiple births are the single most significant risk to mothers and children during IVF treatment. All the risks of pregnancy and birth are significantly increased in women pregnant with multiple rather than one foetus.

Risks to mothers

The risks of twin pregnancies to mothers include:

- Miscarriage and the physical and mental traumas thereof and the physical and mental traumas thereof.
- A 2-3 fold increased risk of hypertension/pre-eclampsia during pregnancy.
- A 2-3 fold increased risk of gestational diabetes (i.e. diabetes caused by the pregnancy).
- Anaemia (iron deficiency).
- Excessive bleeding, especially during and after delivery.
- The need for assisted delivery (e.g. caesarean section or delivery with forceps).
- The mortality risk is doubled for women expecting twins compared to singleton pregnancies.

Risks to the babies:

- Death in pregnancy (miscarriage)
- The risks of illness, disability and death are highly increased in multiple pregnancies because the babies are born prematurely and are underdeveloped. Some other risks include:
- 50-60% of twins are born prematurely (before 37 weeks of pregnancy) and have a low birth weight (less than 2500 grams or 5.5 lbs).
- Triplets have a 90% chance of being born before 37 weeks of pregnancy and of having a low birth weight.
- The risk of death for premature babies around the week of birth is five times higher for twins and nine times higher for triplets compared to singletons. Some effects of prematurity can affect a child's health and wellbeing throughout their lives.
- Identical ('monozygous') twins have an even worse outcome than 'dizygous' (non-identical) twins, including birth defects.
- Twins are four times more likely to have cerebral palsy than singleton babies and triplets are 18 times more likely to have this condition, mainly but not entirely caused by associated prematurity.