



Will My Babies Be Identical?

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns.

Perinatal Education:
206-598-4003

Many parents of multiples want to know during their pregnancy if their babies are identical or fraternal. This is an important question to ask your health care provider, not just to satisfy your curiosity, but because it can affect your pregnancy.

Fraternal Twins

Fraternal twins are called *dizygotic* because 2 separate eggs are fertilized by 2 separate sperm. This results in siblings that just happen to be in the uterus at the same time. They are not identical. They can be the same sex or opposite sexes. Triplets or more are usually fraternal.

Fraternal babies always have their own amniotic sac and their own placenta, although sometimes the placentas can become fused during pregnancy because they are so close together. The placentas of fraternal babies do not have blood vessels that share blood.

Identical Twins

Identical twins are called *monozygotic* because 1 fertilized egg splits into 2. This means the babies are genetically identical and are always the same sex.

Identical babies usually have their own amniotic sac, but can either have their own placenta or share 1 placenta. Concerns arise when identical babies share a placenta or have communicating vessels between their placentas, since 1 baby can receive too much blood flow while another baby receives too little. Another rare problem happens when identical babies are both in the same sac because their bodies and cords can become entangled.

Your care provider can usually tell you during your pregnancy whether you have fraternal or identical babies. Sometimes an analysis of the placenta or placentas after birth can tell whether your babies are fraternal or identical. Other times, genetic testing on your growing children is the only way to know for sure.

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