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Twin and Multiple Births are on the Rise

By Nancy Wurtzel

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by: **Nancy Wurtzel**

Did you know that the number of twin births have more than doubled since the early 1970s? Today, about one of every 35 births in the United States are twins. Even more significant is the number of triplet and higher multiple births which have increased 200 percent over the last three decades.

Why the huge jump in the number of multiple births?

The most obvious reason for the growing birth rates of twins and multiples is the use of fertility drugs and treatments. These medical interventions are most often the reason for births of four or more multiples. Recent studies from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) show that approximately 43 percent of live births resulting from assisted reproductive techniques were multiples.

But fertility drugs don't tell the whole story.

Where you live could make a difference. If you reside in Massachusetts or Connecticut, a study by the National Center for Health Statistics found that the rates for twin deliveries was as much as 25 percent higher than the overall national rate. If you want to give birth to triplets, move to Nebraska or New Jersey. Both states boast a percentage of triplets that is twice the national average.

On the other hand, if you reside in tropical Hawaii your chances of having a multiple will decrease to about 30 percent below the overall U.S. rate.

The time of year and the number of daylight hours also has an impact on multiple births. More fraternal twins are conceived in July than in any other month, while January has the fewest twin conceptions. Scientists speculate that this is probably due to the longer length of daylight in July, which allows for a higher secretion of the Follicle Stimulating Hormone in women.

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Enhanced medical care and good nutrition may play a role in skyrocketing multiple birth rates, although experts caution that it is difficult to directly link these influences. In fact, if access to state-of-the-art medicine were a deciding factor, then why does the Yoruba tribe of Nigeria have the highest twinning incidence in the entire world? These Nigerian people attribute it to their population's consumption of a specific type of yam. Yams? That's right, scientists have discovered that these colorful vegetables that are grown only in Africa contain a high level of a substance that is similar to the hormone estrogen -- which could bring on multiple ovulation.

Surprisingly, age can work in a woman's favor when it comes to conceiving twins. Older mothers traditionally have a higher chance of delivering fraternal twins, with the odds increasing to one in 27 when the mother is 35 years or older.

While identical twins have no familial connection, it is true that fraternal twins can run in the family. Female fraternal twins score an impressive one in 17 chance of giving birth to their own set of fraternal twins, probably because many carry a gene for hyperovulation, which means they sometimes release

more than one egg during ovulation. And, if a woman has already given birth to fraternal twins, the chance of another set increases fourfold.

Want to learn more about babies and multiples? Visit the All About Baby website at

for extensive child-related content, including tips on how to pick the best name

for your newborn, interesting birth statistics, a list of the most popular given names for children and much more.

**All statistics were taken from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the National Center for Health Statistics and from the National Organization of Mothers of Twins Club (NOMOTC).

Nancy Wurtzel founded her ecommerce business, All About Baby, in 1995. All About Baby located online at

specializes in personalized and memorable gifts for children as well

as interesting and helpful child-related site content. Ms. Wurtzel consults with small businesses seeking to expand.

Midwives: Your Best Bet!

By Yvonne Lapp Cryns

History

In 1900 half of all Americans were born into the hands of a midwife, at home. Early studies comparing

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the birth outcomes of physicians versus midwives showed that midwives had fewer maternal and infant losses than the doctors. The United States had a very high percentage of maternal deaths compared to other countries.

Reports done by the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection, the national Committee on the Costs of Medical Care, and the New York Academy of Medicine in the 1930's all concluded that midwives were safer than physicians. These reports chastised doctors for their frequency of interventions which led to problems. Many physicians, in response to the findings of the reports, placed the blame on the midwives claiming that midwives were "ignorant", "dirty", untrained and a threat to the safety of childbearing women. Medical journals and popular magazines contained many articles bashing midwives and blaming them for the nations appalling maternal mortality and infant mortality rates. Many physicians and public health advocates spoke up for the midwives and their excellent statistics, but the prestige of the anti-midwife physicians and the strong push to move births into the hospitals far over-shadowed their voices. This barrage of anti-midwife articles and propaganda continues today despite the lack of any studies or statistics to prove claims that physicians guarantee the safest outcomes or healthier babies or mothers.

What do the Statistics Show?

Every valid study to date has shown that midwife-attended birth is at least as safe as physician-attended birth. Additionally, those who have a midwife-attended birth can expect to have fewer interventions of all kinds. In the early 1970's only 0.5% of all births were attended by midwives, but in 1980 this grew to 2.1% and in 1990 to 3.9%*. Infant mortality, IM, is one criteria for assessing safety of births. The most general use of the term includes infant deaths from birth to the first birthday. 1990 statistics from the Center for Disease Control show that Direct Entry Midwives had the lowest IM, half that of M.D.'s.

Click on this link to see the stats chart on my website:

* Undoubtedly the number of births attended by midwives of all kinds is higher. In some states, nurse-midwives mainly work as employees under physicians and the insurance companies pay more for a physician attended birth. In order to receive the largest monetary compensation for births, and because the midwife is "under physician supervision" by law, the birth certificate is completed as through the doctor were attending, even if this was not the case. Additionally, in states where Direct Entry Midwives are not licensed or Direct Entry Midwifery is prohibited, many births either go unreported or are reported as unattended or the category of midwife is absent from the birth certificate. Statistics from Center for Disease Control, US Birth Cohort of 1990, Table 43, May 18, 1995.

Yvonne Lapp Cryns is the owner of Midwives .net –

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