

## Twin pregnancy: useful informations

A pregnancy is called **twin** when there are **two or more fetuses** in utero. This happens in about one in 80 women, but treatments for infertility and maternal age above 35 years increase the possibility that a pregnancy is twin. Below you find some informations about bigemine pregnancies, those in which there are two fetuses in utero.

### Are all twin pregnancies the same?

No, twin pregnancies can be of two types:

- dizygotic, with non-identical twins, like two brothers born in different years: therefore, they can have the same or different sex, but they will each have their own sack and their own placenta
- monozygotic, with identical twins of equal sex

### How many placentas and sacks are there in monozygotic pregnancies?

This depends on when the separation of the fertilized egg took place.

- if the separation of the egg occurred early, two placentas and two amniotic sacks will be formed: diamniotic bicorial pregnancy;
- if the separation occurs later the embryos will each be in their own amniotic sac, but will share the same placenta: monochorionic bi-biotic pregnancy;

if the separation occurs after the 8th day, the chicks will have in common both the amniotic sac and the placenta: monochorionic monoamniotic pregnancy (very rare)

### What are the risks of twin pregnancy?

In twin pregnancy, there is an increased risk for both maternal and fetal complications.

### What are the maternal risks in a twin pregnancy?

Among the major risks are preterm birth, hypertension, gestational diabetes, bleeding after childbirth; common pregnancy disorders are more pronounced (nausea, heartburn, lumbago, etc.).

For this reason, special attention is required and more frequent monitoring than single pregnancy.

### What are the fetal risks common to all twin pregnancies?

Twins may be born prematurely, have intrauterine growth disorders or malformations more frequently than individuals. Monochorionic twin pregnancy also has some specific risks compared to bicorial pregnancy.

### What are the risks of a monochorionic twin pregnancy?

In the case of monochorionic pregnancy the twins share the placenta and the circulation; in 15% of monochorionic pregnancies the fetal-fetal transfusion syndrome can develop: this is a condition in which a circulatory imbalance occurs between a twin called 'donor' because it gives his blood to the other twin, called 'recipient', which therefore he receives too much. This complication can have serious consequences



for twins and it is important to request timely control if a sudden abdomen increase is noted. Growth problems in the uterus and malformations are also more frequent.

*What are the recommended ultrasound checks in twin pregnancy?*

It is important to carry out an ultrasound in the first trimester to verify if the pregnancy is in regular evolution, the number of placentas (bichorial, monochorionic) and of present sacks (biamniotic, monoamniotic). On this occasion it is also possible to obtain information and possibly carry out screening tests for the chromosomal abnormalities suggested in twin pregnancies.

*What are the recommended ultrasound checks in case of twin twin pregnancy?*

Starting from 19-20 weeks it is recommended to undergo ultrasound checks every 4-6 weeks.

*What are the recommended ultrasound checks in case of monochorionic twin pregnancy?*

If the current pregnancy is monochorionic, ultrasound checks are performed every two weeks starting from the 16th week, especially for the early identification of fetal-fetal transfusion syndrome.

Furthermore, given the increased incidence of congenital heart disease in this type of pregnancy, the execution of a fetal echocardiography is indicated.

In case of complications it is advised to go to a center dedicated to twin pregnancies, where it is possible to have a specialized evaluation of the pregnancy.