



Human
Fertilisation &
Embryology
Authority

Multiple births

What you need to
know

When you're going through fertility treatment, you're understandably focussed on getting pregnant and may think that having two embryos transferred to the womb could make that happen. But did you know that putting more than one embryo back in the womb can increase the risk of serious harm – to you and your babies?

Twins might seem like a dream come true – an instant family; plus we all know people who have had wonderful, happy, healthy twin babies. But the reality is twins are also six times more likely to be born prematurely than single babies, which can lead to long-term health problems such as difficulty breathing, cerebral palsy and other physical and learning difficulties.

Transferring one embryo is best practice for most women

You can significantly reduce your chance of having a multiple birth by having only one embryo put back in the womb – called elective single embryo transfer or eSET. You can then have your remaining embryo(s) frozen for use in later cycles.

As the table below shows, for most women having IVF, transferring one embryo is just as successful as having a double embryo transfer and your chance of having a multiple pregnancy is much lower. Bear in mind that sometimes the highest quality embryo is selected for eSET, which can have a slight impact on birth rates.

Pregnancy and multiple pregnancy rates for women aged 37 or under on their first fresh treatment cycle (initial cycle in 2013)

	Elective single embryo transfer		Double embryo transfer	
	Pregnancy rate	Multiple pregnancy rate	Pregnancy rate	Multiple pregnancy rate
Rates from fresh transfer	45%	2%	40%	32%
Rates from frozen transfer	49%	2%	-	-

We want safe, effective fertility treatment for everyone. That's why we recommend women have an eSET unless the clinic has good reasons for recommending a double embryo transfer. Ask your clinic about eSET.

The best clinics have a good success rate and a low multiple birth rate. As part of our One at a Time campaign, we've set every clinic a target that only 10% of their IVF births should be multiples. You can find out how your clinic is getting on by searching Choose a Fertility Clinic: guide.hfea.gov.uk/guide.

Find out more

Check out the One at a Time website at: <http://oneatotime.org.uk>.

Find us at www.hfea.gov.uk.

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