



# Helping Families Prepare for the Birth of Multiples

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# Multiple births and childbirth education

“Getting information to families expecting...multiples is extremely important since a lot of the women will experience preterm labour, have babies in the NICU, will need support with breastfeeding and parenting issues, and will need to network with other families locally”

-Patter Cross, 2000

# Multiple births and childbirth education

- Parents expecting more than one baby have different learning needs than parents expecting singletons
  - Multiple pregnancies are at higher risk for both maternal and fetal complications
  - Parenting, breastfeeding and bringing babies home present unique challenges
- Difficult to address these unique needs within the context of traditional prenatal classes



# Multiple births and childbirth education

- Increase in number of multiple births per year, in addition to the uniqueness and increased likelihood of complications warrants finding ways to meet the needs of this special population
  - Between 1994 and 2003, the rate of multiple births (per 100 births) increased **35%**
  - Each year approximately **10,000** multiple birth babies are born in Canada
  - There are approximately **150,000** Canadian multiple birth children under age of 20



# Multiple births and childbirth education at Mount Sinai Hospital

- Multiple births comprise **3-4%** of births at MSH (211-238 births per year), in keeping with national averages
- Offer multiple birth specific childbirth education
  - Parents of multiples lunch ‘n’ learn series
  - Preparing for the birth of multiples evening series



# Results of learner needs assessment focus groups

- Getting the news
- Pregnancy
  - general
  - high risk
- Labour
- The babies
  - normal newborn
  - NICU experience
- **Feeding**
  - breastfeeding techniques
  - feeding info
  - feeding schedules
  - feeding options
- **Going home**
  - schedules
  - philosophies/attitudes
- Relationships
  - marital/parenthood
  - siblings
  - babies
- Coping with stress and change
  - philosophies/attitudes
- **Getting organized**
  - car seats, strollers, stuff
  - while pregnant
- Supports
  - medical staff
  - support groups (structured)
  - support groups (unstructured)
  - philosophies/attitudes
- **Sleep**
- Developmental
- Pregnant again
- Losing a child
  - structured
  - unstructured
  - philosophies/attitudes
- Individuality
- Formatting of the video



# Preparing for the Birth of Multiples

## 7-week series class outline

### Week One

- Introductions and overview of classes
- Final weeks of pregnancy (changes, common discomforts)
- Signs and symptoms of preterm labour / Stages of labour
- Labour video

### Week Two

- Coping with pain in labour
  - Comfort measures / analgesia / epidurals
- Role of support people / labour coaches
- Care in labour
- Variations in labour
  - Inductions, augmentations, assisted deliveries, caesarean sections

### Week Three

- Video of a caesarean birth
- Birth planning
- Health care professionals (who will be involved in your care)
- Hospital tour

# Preparing for the Birth of Multiples

## 7-week series class outline

### Week Four

- Taking care of Mom postpartum / postpartum depression
- Normal newborns (appearance, behaviours, health and illness)
- Basic baby care (baby bath, diapering, dressing, swaddling, cord care)
- Keeping babies safe (car seats, SIDS, childproofing)

### Week Five

- Breastfeeding Basics
  - Benefits of breastfeeding
  - Anatomy and physiology / positioning and latching
  - Feeding patterns (# and length of feeds, changes as babies get older)
  - Identifying that babies are getting enough
- Use of bottles, pacifiers, supplements, etc.
- Resources / Where to get help

### Week Six

- Preparing to take your babies home
  - Preparing the physical environment (sleeping arrangements, care stations)
  - Time management / planning for help
  - Taking care of each other
- Resources for parents of multiples

### Week Seven

- Wrap up of all topics
- Meet with 'graduate' parents
- Questions and answers



# Pregnancy

- Nutritional needs are greater and more difficult to meet
- Common discomforts tend to appear sooner and are greater in degree of severity
- Many expectant mothers of multiples need to be off work sooner
- Increased monitoring and fetal surveillance
- Higher risk for pregnancy complications

# Labour and Birth

- Preterm labour
- Earlier induction of labour
- Fetal monitoring
- Anesthesia recommendations
- Vaginal delivery vs. cesarean sections
  - The Miracle of Birth II “Robyn’s birth”



# Postpartum Issues

- Increased risk for postpartum depression, relationship issues
- Recovery from pregnancy, labour and birth may be extended and more difficult
- Never underestimate the effects of inadequate sleep
- Isolation
- Importance of connecting with other parents of multiples



# Breastfeeding

- Coping with two babies
  - Supply issues
  - Scheduling vs. on demand
  - Separately or together
  - Positioning for simultaneous feeding
- Getting a break
  - Pumping
  - Giving bottles
  - Use of pacifiers
  - Supplementation



# Caring for two or more babies

- Meeting the simultaneous needs of more than one baby
  - Attending to babies as individuals with unique personalities and needs
  - Logistics of double the work
- Safe sleeping environments
  - Keeping babies together
  - Babies bedsharing with parents
  - Getting enough sleep



# Getting organized

- Time management
- Planning for help
  - Where to look for help
  - Comparison of types of help available
    - Family/friends vs professional support
- Resources for parents of multiples
  - Multiple Births Canada
  - Parents of Multiple Births Association



# NICU Experience

- Coping with sick babies
- Issues with bonding
- Babies being separated
- Breastfeeding
- Graduating from the NICU

