



Multiple Births Canada / Naissance multiples Canada BACKGROUND

**National Multiple Births Awareness Day
May 28th, 2013**

***You're not alone – Canada's multiple-birth
community is here to support you.***

www.multiplebirthscanada.org

NEEDS OF MULTIPLE-BIRTH INFANTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Compared to parents with a single baby, parents who give birth to two, three or more babies need more time at home for the following reasons:

1. Since mothers of multiples are more likely to have a caesarean delivery and other *pregnancy complications*, they experience delayed recovery, and difficulty in holding, carrying and caring for infants.
2. Over half of all multiple-birth infants are *born early and/or too small*, are more vulnerable and at greater risk of infant death, and have short and long term health problems. In particular:
 - Many require extended neonatal care;
 - Premature babies require more frequent feedings and vigilant care;
 - Developmental delays and Cerebral Palsy are common and may require parents to commit to intensive and ongoing involvement in therapies throughout the first few years;
 - Multiples have an increased risk of congenital anomalies, monozygotic twins in particular;
 - When a major defect occurs in monozygotic twins, 80 percent of the time, only one child is affected. Again, the bonding and attachment processes are further challenged by the complex parental feelings accompanying these discrepancies.
 - Stillbirths and infant deaths are nearly five times greater. Parents experiencing this anguish need extra time to grieve for their lost baby(ies) and yet cope with caring for the survivor(s) and managing the home;
 - When one or more of the babies need prolonged hospitalization while the healthier multiple(s) is released from the hospital, it adds stress for the parents if they need to travel back and forth to an out of town hospital to visit sick baby(ies) and at the same time care for the baby(ies) and/or other siblings at home. This situation can have a negative impact on both the breastfeeding and attachment processes.
 - Low and discrepant birth weights between multiples can compound the parental perceptions and attitudes that influence the bonding and attachment processes. The maternal and paternal emotional attachment process takes longer and is more complex.



3. *Physical and emotional stress* for parents and caregivers, due to the demands of caring for the babies, other siblings (if any), and running the household:



- Without additional support, it is very difficult for parents with twins, triplets or more to hold and *transport* several babies at the same time;
- Many mothers suffer from *sleep deprivation*, but still maintain an unrelenting workload, unless professional help is acquired;
- Mothers of multiples require informed, sufficient and sustained *support to breastfeed* their infants successfully;
- Parents must *divide their attention* between two (or more) children with similar developmental needs which is likely to affect the quantity and quality of interactions experienced by each infant.

- These challenges may result in anxiety, depression, and feelings of isolation for multiple-birth parents.
- As a result, families of multiple-birth children are at a higher risk for family dysfunction and postpartum depression.

4. Parents often face a *financial dilemma* – they assume extraordinary financial commitments yet if they return to the paid labour force, suitable childcare for two or more babies can be very expensive and difficult to find. For instance:

- Purchasing *special equipment* such as strollers designed specifically for two or more children;
- A *larger vehicle* to accommodate several infant car seats safely within the law;
- A larger home or renovations may be needed;
- Compared to the first year costs of basic infant needs for a single baby, expenses are \$5,000.00 higher for twins, \$10,000.00 higher for triplets, and \$17,000.00 higher for quadruplets;
- Consistent *volunteer help* is difficult to find. To purchase additional in-home support services can cost as much as \$7,000.00 for the first year;
- Daycare costs (without subsidies) for one set of twins under the age 2 is over \$25,000.00 per year;
 - Daycare vacancies are difficult to find; often parents are forced to separate their babies to ensure daycare placement – this improves once the babies reach 18-24 months old as regulated by each province. Separate placement increases the financial and time stressors imposed on already busy parents.

“Creation of healthy public policies must recognize the need for and benefits of additional supports for multiple-birth families. Programming must address barriers to supports and services for multiple-birth families including lack of services, long waiting lists for services, and the need for service coordination.”

*Low Birth Weight & Preterm
Multiple Births:
A Canadian Profile
Best Start – Meilleur Départ 2005*

For more information on Risks for the Mother visit this link:

http://multiplebirthscanada.org/mbc_factsheets/FS-RisksforMothers-Part1_FINAL.pdf

For more information on Risks for the Children visit this link:

http://multiplebirthscanada.org/mbc_factsheets/FS-RisksforChildren-Part2_FINAL.pdf

ABOUT MULTIPLE BIRTHS CANADA

Multiple Births Canada (MBC) is a national charitable organization with a mission to improve the quality of life for multiple birth individuals and their families in Canada. We fulfill our mission by providing support, education, research, and advocacy both nationally and internationally to individuals, families, local Chapters, and organizations that have a personal or professional interest in multiple birth issues.

MBC has a dedicated team of volunteers who work on behalf of Canadian multiple-birth families and individuals. Some of our key activities include:

- Working to improve the support networks and services available to multiple birth individuals and their families across the country.
- Producing educational resources and informative publications for multiple-birth families and professionals; including our quarterly e-magazine *Multiple Moments*, and a wide variety of booklets, pamphlets, and fact sheets.
- Promoting stronger relations between parents of multiples and professionals who are interested in multiple-birth issues (e.g., doctors, nurses, doulas, educators, researchers). This work helps to ensure that professionals are aware of the unique needs and concerns of multiple birth families.
- Representing the Canadian multiple-birth community with representation on national committees (i.e. Multiple Birth Patient Committee and Healthy Singleton Birth Committee with Health Canada (formerly Assisted Human Reproduction Canada), at national and international conferences, and in research, health promotion, and other related initiatives. Activities such as these help raise awareness of multiple birth issues and help to ensure that the needs and concerns of multiple-birth families are taken into account by health care professionals, educators, researchers, government officials, and other professionals.
- Networking with other national organizations (e.g., Health Canada, the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada, the Canadian Institute of Child Health, the Canadian Health Network, and Infertility Awareness Association of Canada) to promote multiple birth issues within Canada. These organizations seek out Multiple Births Canada to represent the Canadian multiple-birth community and provide input on key policies, programs, and proposals that affect multiple-birth families.
- Networking with international organizations such as the International Society for Twin Studies (ISTS), the International Council of Multiple Birth Organizations (ICOMBO), and other national organizations in countries world-wide to promote multiple birth issues on the international stage. This work resulted in the often-cited Declaration of Rights and Statement of Needs of Twins and Higher Order Multiples.
- Advising professionals who support multiple-birth families (e.g., nurses, prenatal instructors, educators, bereavement counselors) to ensure that the best and most up-to-date care is provided to all multiple-birth families.
- Advising local and national media on multiple birth issues to ensure that the interests and concerns of multiple-birth families are accurately conveyed.
- Working with government agencies to enhance services, supports, and opportunities for multiple-birth individuals and their families.
- Sharing information and research findings with multiple-birth individuals, professionals, members and MBC Affiliate Chapters through publications, e-newsletter bulletins, the MBC web site, and at Multiple Birth Canada's Annual General Meeting and Conference.

SUPPORT NETWORKS

Multiple Births Canada offers several Support Networks for families facing unique situations and challenges.

These networks are intended to provide multiple-birth families networking opportunities with other multiple-birth families in the same or similar situation through a listing service that allows them to share concerns and areas of expertise with one another. It is expected that the registered families will contact each other directly through e-mail, the MBC Facebook group, regular mail and telephone.

Some Support Networks produce a newsletter and are included in Multiple Births Canada's magazine, Multiple Moments, and the Members Only section of the MBC website. The Loss of Multiples Network distributes a FREE e-newsletter, Forever Angels, by e-mail 10 times annually.

- [Breastfeeding Support Network](#)
- [Preterm Birth Support Network](#)
- [Higher Order Multiples Support Network](#)
- [Loss Support Network](#)
- [Special Needs Support Network](#)
- [Lone Parent Support Network](#)
- [Francophone Support Network](#)
- [Father Support Network](#)
- [LGBTQ+ Support Network](#)
- [Adult Multiples Support Network](#)

PUBLICATIONS

Publications available from Multiple Births Canada include booklets, pamphlets, fact sheets and Multiple Moments (the magazine for the Canadian Multiple-Birth Family), with information on everything from prenatal care, breastfeeding multiples, special needs and loss of a multiple.

For our list of Fact Sheets visit this link:

<http://multiplebirthscanada.org/index.php/education/publications/fact-sheets>

Multiple Moments is a quarterly publication full of stories from parents of multiples, multiples and professionals in areas such as health care and child development. Multiple Moments is the only Canadian publication produced for multiple-birth families.

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Supporting Multiple Births Together
