Question: In utero, do my multiples grow and develop at the same rate as a singleton?

Birth weights of multiple babies tend to be lower than singletons due to the fact that multiple babies are sharing the same amount of space and nourishment. The nourishment allotment can often be unequally shared, causing a difference in fetal development.

For the first two trimesters, twins manage to grow at the same rate as a singleton but from weeks 26-28, the growth rate decreases and continues to decrease for the duration of the pregnancy. Due to the cramped space within the uterus, and possible unequal sharing of maternal nutrition, there can be slight developmental/physical differences between the babies (e.g. minor speech differences, delayed sitting up, walking, etc.). It is agreed that multiple birth children tend to be developmentally slower than singleton children, during the early stages of growth.

Nowadays, birth weights for multiples are higher due to the fact that multiple birth pregnancies are very closely monitored. A greater awareness of the impact of good nutrition and mothers carrying their babies for a longer period of time have contributed to an increase in well developed multiple babies. When looking at development, the age of multiples is corrected. Medical personnel take into account how many weeks premature the babies were born.

Several studies conducted after the birth of multiples, have shown a remarkable catch-up during the first year when compared to singletons. By the age of four years, twins had almost caught up with singletons in height, but less so in weight. By eight years of age, there were no significant differences in either height or weight between twins and singletons.

Additional Resources

- Multiple Blessings: From Pregnancy Through Childhood, A Guide for Parents of Twins, Triplets, or More, by Betty Rothbart, M.S.W.
- The Art of Parenting Twins: The Unique Joys and Challenges of Raising Twins and Other Multiples by Patricia Maxwell Malmstrom and Janet Poland
- The Nature and Nurture of Twins, 1983 by Dr. Elizabeth M. Bryan, Multiple Birth Foundation, UK
- The Joy of Twins and other Multiple Births, by Pamela Patrick Novotny
- Twins! Pregnancy, Birth and the First Year of Life, by Connie L. Agnew, Alan H. Klein and Jill Allison Ganon
- Twin Care: Prenatal to Six Months, Multiple Births Canada

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Sourced from Nature and Nurture of Twins, by Dr. Elizabeth M. Bryan.

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Questions?

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