Resources regarding some special needs situations one or more multiples may face.

There are various health issues which any baby/child might face. For one or more multiples, the challenges may be greater because of the nature of their births. As some multiples are preterm or of a low birth weight, i.e., under 2500 grams (5-1/2 pounds), and due to possible unequal sharing of the available maternal nutrition while in utero, these factors may influence their health status. With this in mind, below are a few of the special needs possibilities that one or more of your children might face. This is by no means a complete list and this information is provided solely for your convenience.

IF YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS ABOUT THE HEALTH OF ANY OF YOUR BABIES, PLEASE SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION.

Asperger’s Syndrome
Characterized as one of the five pervasive developmental disorders, and is commonly referred to as a form of high-functioning autism.

In very broad terms, individuals with Asperger’s Syndrome have normal or above average intellectual capacity, and atypical or less well developed social skills, often with emotional/social development or integration happening later than usual as a result.

Treatments for Asperger’s Syndrome depend on the patient’s level of adaptive functioning.

For patients with severe case of Asperger’s Syndrome, treatment is similar to the treatment for autistic disorder.

Further information:
www.utoronto.ca/neurosci/newsletters/dec.95.html
www.theparentprocess.com
www.factsfigures.com/asperger-syndrome

Cleft Lip and/or Palate
The causes of cleft lip are not well known. The development of the lip and palate takes place early in the pregnancy (between 5-10 weeks gestation). Some of the causes may be related to a genetic predisposition, some drugs (especially drugs that help to control seizures), and some illnesses in the mom. There is also thought to be a link with maternal smoking and alcohol use.

Further information:
www.marchofdimes.com/professionals/680_1210.asp
www.widesmiles.org

Cri du Chat Syndrome (Cat’s Cry)
A genetic disorder caused by the loss or misplacement of genetic material from the fifth chromosome. It was first identified in 1963 by Professor Lejeune. He described the syndrome after the sound that many of the babies and young children make when crying.

This cry, along with some of the other notable features, is so characteristic of the syndrome that a doctor can usually identify the condition before a chromosome analysis has taken place.

As well as the physical features, Cri du Chat causes a varied level of mental handicap. There are a few children who attend mainstream education, but the majority of the children need more specialized education. The long term outlook for children with Cri du Chat is quite good.

Further Information:
www.criduchat.asn.au
www.familyvillage.wisc.edu/lib_cri.htm
www.criduchat.u-net.com

Down’s (or Down) Syndrome
A naturally occurring chromosomal arrangement that has always been a part of the human condition. The occurrence of Down’s Syndrome (DS) is universal across racial and gender lines, and it is present in approximately one in 800 births in Canada.

DS is not a disease, disorder, defect or medical condition. It is inappropriate and offensive to refer to people with DS as “afflicted with” or “suffering from” it.

The sole characteristic shared by all persons with DS is the presence of extra genetic material associated with the 21st chromosome. The effects of that extra genetic material vary greatly from individual to individual. Persons with DS
karyotypes may be predisposed to certain illnesses and medical conditions, but that genetic arrangement does not guarantee their development. The same illnesses and conditions are also present in the general population. Timely and accurate diagnosis and appropriate treatment of these illnesses and conditions improves both the length and quality of life, to the same extent as would be expected in the population without DS. Vigilance on the part of health care practitioners is required to identify and treat any of them if they arise. (adapted from www.cdss.ca)

Further information:
www.cdss.ca
www.cnck.org
www.downs-syndrome.org.uk
www.nas.com/downsyn/
www.ndss.org

Dyslexia
Dyslexia is difficulty with the alphabet, reading, writing and spelling in spite of normal or above-normal intelligence, conventional teaching methods, and adequate sociocultural opportunity. Dyslexia is thought to be genetic and hereditary.

Further information:
www.dyslexiaassociation.ca
www.learningbreakthrough.com

Dystonia
Dystonia is a neurological disease that results in uncontrolled muscle spasm.

Further information:
www.dystonia-foundation.org

Spina Bifida
A neural tube defect (a disorder involving incomplete development of the brain, spinal cord, and/or their protective coverings) caused by the failure of the fetus’ spine to close properly during the first month of pregnancy. Infants born with Spina Bifida (SB) sometimes have an open lesion on their spine where significant damage to the nerves and spinal cord has occurred. Although the spinal opening can be surgically repaired shortly after birth, the nerve damage is permanent, resulting in varying degrees of paralysis of the lower limbs. Even when there is no lesion present, there may be improperly formed or missing vertebrae and accompanying nerve damage. In addition to physical and mobility difficulties, most individuals have some form of learning disability. SB may also cause bowel and bladder complications, and many children with SB have hydrocephalus (excessive accumulation of cerebrospinal fluid in the brain).

(adapted from www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/spina_bifida.htm)

Further information:
www.sbhac.ca
www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/spina_bifida.htm
www.sbaa.org

Documents and Articles
Multiple Births Canada Fact Sheets on various topics related to multiple pregnancy, births and parenting, as well as feeding multiples http://multiplebirthscanada.org/index.php/education/publications/fact-sheets

Compiled by Lynda P. Haddon, Multiple Birth Educator, www.multiplebirthsfamilies.com
Reviewed by Francesca Bell

Recommended Sources of Information:
Multiple Births Canada
www.multiplebirthscanada.org
Toll-Free (in Canada): 1-866-228-8824
Telephone: 613-834-TWIN(8946)
Email: office@multiplebirthscanada.org

Multiple Births Canada / Naissances Multiples Canada is a Registered Charity.

BN# 895390110 RR0001
Find us at CanadaHelps.org

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