The term “multiple pregnancy” refers to a pregnancy that includes more than 1 fetus (baby). Most multiple pregnancies are twins. However, higher-order multiple pregnancies such as triplets and quadruplets can also occur.

The incidence of naturally occurring twins in the general population is about 1 in 80. There does tend to be a familial risk—in that if you have a family history of twins, your risk may be higher. The risk of naturally occurring triplets is about $1/80^2 = 1/6400$. The risk of naturally occurring quads is $1/80^3 = 1/512,000$.

However, the risk of multiple pregnancies is significantly increased with the use of fertility treatments. The risk with fertility drugs which induce ovulation (i.e., stimulate the ovaries to release more than 1 egg) of inducing a multiple pregnancy may be related to a number of factors. These include maternal age, the number of eggs being released (this is something that can be monitored by ultrasound), the quality of the sperm (i.e., the chances of sperm fertilizing the eggs), the length of fertility difficulties, etc.

Generally speaking, there are 3 forms of fertility treatments which may put you at risk for a multiple pregnancy.

1. The use of fertility drugs (such as Clomiphene, Femara, and injectable drugs) to induce ovulation.
2. The use of fertility drugs to induce ovulation—combined with intra uterine insemination. (IUI)
3. In Vitro Fertilization. Here the risk is directly related to the number of embryos that are transferred in to the uterus.

There are many risks related to multiple pregnancies, and obviously the risks are increased with higher-order multiple pregnancies e.g., another more than twins.

These risks are divided into 2 groups….

1. **Risks to the mother.** Any complication that can occur in pregnancy may do so more often when there is a multiple pregnancy. For example, these include but are not limited to the following:
   a. Anemia
   b. Miscarriage
   c. Diabetes
   d. Toxemia (high blood pressure)
   e. Fatigue, nausea and vomiting
   f. Excessive weight gain and fluid retention
   g. Premature labour
   h. Hospitalization
   i. Need for time off work
   j. Thyroid dysfunction
The risks of Multiple pregnancy. The Victoria Fertility Centre

k. Blood clots – thrombo embolism
l. C section
m. Post partum bleeding (hemorrhage)
n. Post partum depression
o. Social stress – dealing with 2 babies

2. **Risks to the babies. The main risk here is of premature delivery and low birth weight.** Such risks include but are not limited to ……..
   a. Intra uterine growth restriction (i.e. poor growth in utero)
   b. Congenital abnormalities e.g. club foot, cleft palate etc. The overall risk to any fetus of having some form of abnormality is about 3 – 4 %, but this risk appears to be slightly higher with multiples.
   c. Chromosome abnormalities. As women get older the risk of having a child with some form of Chromosome problem (such as Downs syndrome) is higher. The risk is slightly increased with twins, triplets etc.
   d. Premature delivery and low birth weight.
   e. Low birth weight can then be associated with learning difficulties, attention deficit disorder, poor growth after birth etc.
   f. Cerebral palsy – the risk of a twin having CP is about 5 - 10 X that of a singleton baby. (On average the risk of cerebral palsy in singleton babies is about 1 – 2/1000, in twins is about 5 – 10/1000 and in triplets is about 30/1000.

Due to the quality of peri natal care today, the chances for babies surviving if they are born prematurely (after 25 weeks gestation) is high – **but the risk of long term complications increases the earlier they are delivered and the lower the birth weights.**

In our attempts to help couples to overcome infertility and get pregnant – with the use of fertility drugs, IUI and IVF – there will be an increased risk of multiple pregnancy. We at VFC do everything we can to maximize your chance of getting pregnant and reduce the chance of multiple pregnancy.

If a multiple pregnancy was to occur, and if there were more than twins, one option to improve the outcome for both mother and babies is a **selective reduction.** This is a procedure whereby one or more of the fetuses is “sacrificed”. It is like having a selective abortion so that the number of fetuses in utero is reduced. It is usually done at about 12 weeks gestation by a procedure similar to an amniocentesis. It is a difficult thing to go through – and apart from the emotional distress, can also cause a risk of miscarriage. i.e. the procedure itself may risk the entire pregnancy being miscarried.

We need to do everything we can to minimize the chance of a multiple pregnancy
Acknowledgement form: Risks of multiple pregnancy

I hereby acknowledge that I have read the information provided me about the risks of multiple pregnancy. I am aware that the medication prescribed and treatment advocated at the Victoria Fertility Center may increase the risk of my having a multiple pregnancy. I have had an opportunity to discuss these issues with the medical staff at the Victoria Fertility Center and feel well informed of my options.

Date: _________________________________________________________

Name: _________________________________________________________

Signed: __________________________________________________________

Name of Partner (optional) ______________________________________________

Signed:  _______________________________________________

Gestational carrier (If applicable)

Date:  _________________________________________________________

Name:  _________________________________________________________

Signed:  _______________________________________________