

# HAVING HEALTHY BABIES ONE AT A TIME

## Why are we worried about twin pregnancies?

We know that you are ready to start or add to your family. You may be concerned about your chances of having a baby using *in vitro* fertilization (IVF) or how much cycles of IVF cost. These concerns are common and may lead you to think about transferring more than one embryo during your IVF procedure. However, transferring more than one embryo increases your chances of having twins or more. **Twin pregnancy is risky for baby and mother**, whether or not IVF is used. Some of these risks include:

- Almost **3 out of 5** twin babies are born **preterm**, or at less than 37 weeks of pregnancy. Twin babies are nearly 6 times as likely to be born preterm as single babies.
- About **1 out of 4** twin babies are admitted to the **neonatal intensive care unit (NICU)**. Twin babies are more than 5 times as likely to be admitted to the NICU as single babies.
- About **7 out of 1,000** twin babies have **cerebral palsy**. Twin babies are more than 4 times as likely to have cerebral palsy as single babies.
- Twin babies are more likely to be **stillborn**, experience **neonatal death**, have **birth defects** of the brain, heart, face, limbs, muscles, or digestive system, and have **autism** than single babies.
- Almost **1 out of 10** women carrying twins gets pregnancy-related **high blood pressure**. Women carrying twins are twice as likely to get pregnancy-related high blood pressure as women carrying single babies.
- Almost **1 out of 20** women carrying twins gets **gestational diabetes**. Women carrying twins are 1.5 times as likely to get gestational diabetes as women carrying single babies.

The best way to reduce the chance of twins from IVF is to reduce the number of embryos transferred.

Research shows that, for some women, transferring one fresh embryo followed by one frozen embryo, if a second transfer is needed, offers the best chance of having a baby without increasing the chance for twins.

*See the other side for details.*



U.S. Department of  
Health and Human Services  
Centers for Disease  
Control and Prevention



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## How many embryos should I transfer to have one baby?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) tracks success rates for women who receive IVF. For the years 2010 to 2012, CDC found that **transferring one embryo at a time can lead to a better chance of having at least one baby while reducing the chance of having twins.** These success rates are only for patients who tried IVF for the first time using fresh (not frozen and thawed) embryos, and who were either

- Younger than 38, using embryos created from their own eggs, and with more than one embryo available for transfer.
- Any age, using embryos created from donor eggs.

The rates below are shown by day of embryo transfer, which can affect success.

### What are my chances of having at least one baby or twins if I transfer one fresh embryo?

- When a fresh embryo was transferred 2-3 days after retrieval, **38%** of women had at least one baby, and less than **1%** had twins.
- When a fresh embryo was transferred 5-6 days after retrieval, **51%** of women had at least one baby, and less than **1%** had twins.

### What if I transfer one fresh embryo but don't have a baby?

During your fresh cycle, your doctor can freeze extra embryos for you to use later. If you don't get pregnant or have a baby during your fresh cycle, you can do a frozen cycle. In a frozen cycle, the frozen embryos are thawed and transferred.

- When a fresh embryo was transferred 2-3 days after retrieval, and then a frozen and thawed embryo was transferred later if needed, **55%** of women had at least one baby, and less than **1%** had twins.
- When a fresh embryo was transferred 5-6 days after retrieval, and then a frozen and thawed embryo was transferred later if needed, **66%** of women had at least one baby, and less than **1%** had twins.

### What are my chances of having at least one baby or twins if I transfer two fresh embryos?

- When two embryos were transferred 2-3 days after retrieval, **49%** of women had at least one baby, and **16%** had twins.
- When two embryos were transferred 5-6 days after retrieval, **60%** of women had at least one baby, and **27%** had twins.

**The option to transfer one fresh embryo followed by one thawed embryo, if needed, offers the highest chance for some IVF patients to have a baby without increasing the chance for twins. Talk with your doctor about which embryo transfer option is right for you.**

The Society for Assisted Reproductive Technology (SART) has developed a tool that can help you figure out your chance of success based on your characteristics. To use this calculator, go to:

<https://www.sartcorsonline.com/Predictor/Patient>

For more information about IVF, see [www.cdc.gov/art](http://www.cdc.gov/art)