

WISCONSIN TWIN RESEARCH NEWSLETTER

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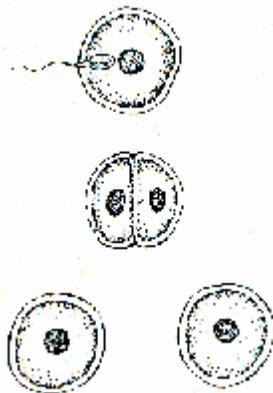
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A Third Type of Twin? Polar Body Twinning

Answering the question of whether twins are genetically identical or fraternal can be more difficult than one might think! Genetically identical twins will certainly have some differences, and fraternal twins can vary a great deal in how similar or different they appear. Some scientists are suggesting that there may be a third type of twin: half-identical.

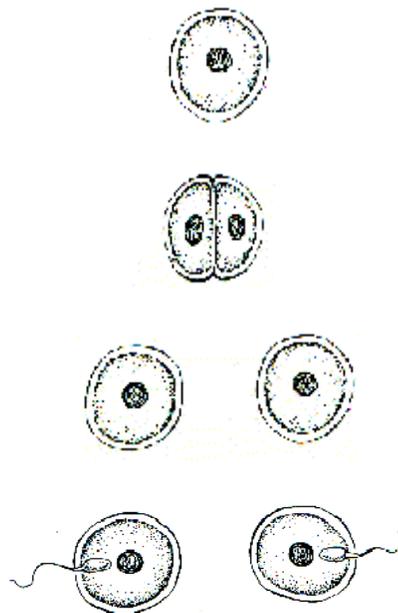
• Genetically identical twins are formed from one egg and one sperm that split after fertilization into two identical halves that go on to develop separately. These twins share 100% of their DNA and are always of the same gender.



• Fraternal twins are formed from two different eggs that are then fertilized by two different sperm. These twins share 50% of their genes on average and can be boy/girl twins.



• Half-identical or polar body twins, may fall somewhere between these two types. Although most people have never heard of them, every egg that is released by the mother is accompanied by a polar body. This polar body, which contains the same set of chromosomes as the egg, usually disappears after fertilization of the egg. Some scientists now theorize that in some cases this polar body may itself be fertilized by a different sperm than the egg. Therefore these twins share on average 75% of their genes, and they may even be boy/girl twins!



Scientists are still researching the idea of half-identical twins. If this type of twin occurs at all, it is likely to be quite rare.

It's Tough to be a Singleton Sibling!

It is hard to imagine a tougher job than raising twins... except raising twins and one or more singleton children at the same time! Twins are so special that they often seem to take center stage in families. As a result, singleton siblings may experience feelings that most children never have to deal with. This makes it important for parents to understand how and why singletons respond to their twin siblings and other family members as they do.

A great deal of the singleton sibling's frustration will likely be a result of the arrival of not one, but *two* new members to the family. According to Pamela Novotny, author of The Joy of Twins, the arrival of twins in the family can "send the older child into fits of regression and generally anti-social behavior." For instance, soon after the arrival of the twins, the older child may become more clingy, have excessive temper tantrums, or regress back to drinking from a bottle instead of a cup. These behaviors occur because many older siblings have spent their whole lives as the center of their parents' universe, receiving the undivided attention of the adults surrounding them. However, the arrival of twins puts an intense strain on parents' time and availability, and older sibling often feels a sense of loss or confusion. As a result, the older child often regresses to infantile behavior in order to regain the desired attention.

Lynda Haddon, president of the Multiple Births Families Association, makes the following suggestions for parents of twins who have experienced some of these issues with their singleton child: (The following suggestions are supported by a number of sources, including the books TWINS: From Conception to Five Years by Averil Clegg and Anne Woollett and the aforementioned The Joy of Twins.)

- Try to avoid calling them "The Twins" or dressing them alike. Doing so may cause the singleton child to feel automatically left out of what they may perceive to be a package.
- Put aside a time each day to spend with your singleton child. If you find that you cannot make space, make a future date to spend time together
- Rely on others! Ask grandparents or close friends to spend some one-on-one time with the singleton sibling.
- Gently remind others that your singleton child is just as special and important as the twins are.
- Allow your child to help take care of the twins if they want to. Helping to take care of the twins may show the child that he or she is still an important part of the family. (Continued in next column)

It's Tough to be a Singleton Sibling! (Cont.)

These suggestions are just a few possibilities for parents who feel their singleton children need help adjusting to life with twins. Of course, each singleton child is different, and parents must decide what method is best for ensuring that their older child knows he or she is just as important as the twins are.

On the other hand, siblings of twins have some great opportunities that most people do not experience! For instance, the older sibling may learn important life lessons at an early age—that their parents have finite resources, that nobody is perfect, and that they can turn to other adults, besides their parents, for support. As a result, siblings of twins often have a much broader base of support than other people do.

In short, it's tough to be a singleton sibling. But parents, friends and family, can help to ensure that singletons enjoy life to the fullest with their twin siblings!

Twins

*So many good things come in pairs,
Like ears and socks and panda bears.
But best of all are sets of twins,
With extra laughter, double grins.*

*There's so much fun in having two
With twice as many points of view.
So much alike, forever linked,
And yet they're also quite distinct.*

*They share a birthday and a name,
But moods and tempers aren't the same.
Although at times they may dispute,
Their loyalty is absolute.*

*From days of youth till life is done,
It's one for both and both for one.
We're all quite novel and precise,
But special folks – God made them twice.*

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Twin Facts

Did you know...

- ❖ In 2000, 118,916 twins were born in the U.S. (29.3 twin births per 1,000 deliveries)
- ❖ Nigeria holds the world record in multiple births. (41.6 twin births per 1,000 deliveries)
- ❖ 18-22 % of twins are left-handed compared to 10 % of singletons.
- ❖ If a mother is a fraternal twin, she's 5 times more likely to have twins.
- ❖ The term cryptophasia refers to twins creating their own dialect.
- ❖ Currently in the U.S., about 30% of twins are identical and 70% are fraternal.

Famous people who are twins:

Ed Sullivan (entertainer)
Jose Canseco (baseball player)
Mario Andretti (race car driver)
James Taylor (singer)
Ann Landers and Abby Van Buren (columnists)
Elvis - twin died at birth (singer)
Alanis Morissette (singer)
John Elway (football player)
Isabella Rosellini (actress)
Gloria Vanderbilt (designer)

Famous people who have parented twins:

Mel Gibson (actor)
Ray Romano (comedian)
Muhammad Ali (boxer)
George Bush (president)
Bing Crosby (singer)
Robert Deniro (actor)
William Shakespeare (writer)
Malcolm X (civil rights activist)
Beverly Cleary (author)
Al Pacino (actor)
Dave Matthews (singer)



How to Keep in Touch ...

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*** Please let us know if your address or telephone number changes so we can still stay in contact with you. ***

Feel free to contact us with any story ideas, feedback, personal stories or questions that you would like to see in future newsletters.

Questions...

Questions...

Questions...



As parents, you have a wonderful perspective that we could never capture in a short visit here to the Twin Center or at your home. As an expert in your children's development, we highly value your input!

We appreciate the time you take in filling out questionnaires. Each piece helps to further the study of child development.

THANK YOU!