

Having Twins — and More: A Parent's Guide to Multiple Pregnancy, Birth and Early Childhood

Elizabeth Nobel with Leo Sorger
(2003). Houghton Mifflin, 3rd ed. US\$18.95

The first edition, published in 1980, was the first textbook available for parents expecting multiple births. Twenty-five years later there is a wealth of information available for prospective parents in the form of textbooks, videos, CD ROMs, and especially on the Internet. The handbook is predominantly a single-author text with many contributors acknowledged in this third edition. Thanks to continuing advances in assisted reproduction there has been an explosion of multiple births in the last quarter century, from an incidence of 1 in 90 to currently 1 in 40 conceptions in the United States of America. Potential readers of this text need to prepare themselves for a full immersion in the world of multiple births. Although the target audience is expectant parents and established parents and grandparents of multiple births, there is a great deal of practical information for perinatal clinicians. Elizabeth Noble aims to provide expectant parents with the information they need to make informed, safe choices and give birth to healthy babies. This comprehensive handbook emphasizes optimal health as well as physical and emotional adjustments to bearing and raising multiples and new insights into risks, complications and treatments.

The author explores the social and medical consequences of multiple births and acknowledges the markedly increased rates of perinatal mortality and prematurity, in the workload for intensive care nurseries, and of subse-

quent neurosensory disabilities, especially cerebral palsy. The text is extraordinarily comprehensive in its scope, involving historical perspectives, the latest epidemiology and biological concepts of multiples and the medical, physiological and social aspects of parenting. The text provides numerous practical hints with vignettes and extensively addresses the important issues of maternal nutrition and parent–infant bonding.

The author openly criticizes the medicalization and high intervention rates in the care of multiple pregnancy. She develops the concept of the nocebo effect, the evil twin of the placebo effect, which results in adverse symptoms when suggestions, instructions and expectations are negative. The nocebo effect occurs when the attitude of the healthcare provider is that something is wrong and needs to be fixed, and leads to parental anxiety and stress. She acknowledges that at diagnosis of a multiple pregnancy, couples should be warned of the high risk for the loss of a twin in the early weeks of pregnancy. Openly challenging medical practices in a book written for parents is questionable. Advice such as 'to stay at home as long as possible when labour begins' and the numerous scenarios for home delivery of twins and triplets should be challenged. Her stance on vaginal birth after cesarean section is not backed up by current literature and the bibliography includes no references after 1988,

and similarly for instrumental delivery in squatting position.

Elizabeth Noble is the founder of the women's health section of the American Physiotherapy Association. Not surprisingly her chapters on prenatal and postpartum exercises and breastfeeding twins are extremely practical. This text for expectant parents as well as parents and grandparents of twins continues to be the most comprehensive resource for guidance through the multiple birth experience. Surprisingly, the author has only superficially addressed the enormous advances in assisted reproductive technology and its relationship to increasing prevalence of multiple births. However, some of the politically incorrect advice given by the author, who challenges conventional obstetric and midwifery wisdom particularly with antenatal and intrapartum management, has the potential to cause confrontation, stress and even adverse perinatal outcomes. The text of 560-plus pages has a flimsy soft cover and coarse paper pages, but at a recommended retail price of only \$18.95 is a readily accessible resource.

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