

## Eight Babies? How is that Possible?



March 9, 2009

by: Bill Stamps

**The news of a California woman giving birth to eight children at once has caused a national debate on the science of fertility treatment. While some are pointing fingers, others are worried about maintaining a woman or couples' right to choose the size of their family. In part one of a series on fertility — Bill Stamps looks into the probability of having multiple births like quintuplets or octuplets.**

Most parents say its hard enough delivering and then caring for one infant, so can you imagine have two at a time? What about three or four? By now you're probably heard that Nadya Suleman of California delivered 8 babies. That alone would might have caused a stir, but Suleman already had six children. And she single.

Fertility specialist doctor blank Dunn remembers when he first heard about Suleman's case.

*"On a professional level, it made me sick."*

He's not the only one. Suleman's case has been discussed in papers, online, even radio talk shows. Most of what people are saying is isn't good.

*"It was clear that somebody that was supposedly a reproductive specialist had done something that wasn't illegal, but it was definitely unethical."*

So how could it have happened. Doctor Dunn says there are no guarantees with in vitro fertilization. When a doctor takes a woman's egg out of her, fertilizes with sperm in a lab and then puts it back into the woman — the odds of it becoming a viable pregnancy are low. In Suleman's case all of the embryos grew.

*"The odds of putting six back and all six taking would probably be in the order of one in millions, because the chance of a single embryo implanting when its frozen and thawed in a younger woman is not as high as people would think. And then to think that six embryos out of six did that and then beyond that two of them statistically split. Those are incalculable number almost."*

Dunn believes there may be more to the story. Maybe the doctor put more embryos than he claims. He says the numbers just don't add up. The case is will likely be investigated. In the meantime, Dr.Dunn says some couples are so desperate to have children, they may ask for more embryos to be implanted than they should.

*"Their odds aren't good; they know their odds aren't good. There's no doubt many of them will say, 'can't we put two more back'...'can't we put three more back'."*

Which brings us to the ethical moral question in this story: Can you tell a woman or a couple how many babies they can have?

*"I think that you can tell a woman how many she should have at one time. I don't think the answer is you can say to a couple you should only have two children or five children."*

The bottom line — couples be careful what you ask for...that is if you want to get any sleep .

(sound of a baby crying).

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