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U.S. woman gives birth to eight babies

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28th January, 2009

THE ARTICLE

A woman in Southern California gave birth on January 27th to octuplets. It is only the second time in US history a mother has delivered eight babies. It is also only the second time ever for all octuplets to survive their first day. Doctors said the six tiny boys and two girls were all doing well and breathing on their own. They all arrived nine weeks early and ranged in weight from 0.68kg to 1.47kg. The mother and the team of doctors received a huge surprise at the end of the birth – an eighth baby. The mother believed she was going to have just seven babies (septuplets) before the birth. After the doctors delivered babies A to G, they discovered baby H. The mother asked the nurses: “Really? An eighth baby? How did we miss that baby?”

There are no pictures of the babies yet. The mother has asked the hospital to keep her identity a secret. She also does not want the media to find out whether or not she took fertility drugs before becoming pregnant. Dr Richard Paulson of the University of Southern California told reporters that the octuplets were probably because of fertility drugs. He also spoke about the risks involved in multiple births: “It's a risky decision to try to have all eight babies. I would not recommend it under any circumstances,” he said. He added that the chances of having eight children naturally, without drugs, were “unbelievably rare”. Twins occur in roughly 1 in 80 births; triplets in 1 in 6,400 births. The likelihood of octuplets being born is 1 in 20 trillion pregnancies.

WARM-UPS

1. BABIES: Walk around the class and talk to other students about babies. Change partners often. After you finish, sit with your partner(s) and share your findings.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

multiple births / U.S. history / survival / breathing / arriving early / surprises / mother / identities / secrets / media / becoming pregnant / fertility / risky decisions / twins

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. OCTUPLETS: What do parents of octuplets need to think about? What advice would you give? Complete the table below. Change partners and share what you wrote.

| 8 kids | Advice |
|-------------------|--------|
| Names | |
| Birthday presents | |
| Transportation | |
| Overseas holidays | |
| Meals | |
| TV remote control | |

4. FERTILITY DRUGS: Students A **strongly** believe fertility drugs should not be allowed; Students B **strongly** believe fertility drugs are necessary. Change partners again and talk about your conversations.

5. MULTIPLE BIRTHS: Is it better to have one baby, twins, triplets, quadruplets, quintuplets...? With your partner(s), talk about the advantages and disadvantages of the following. Change partners and talk about your conversations.

- one baby
- twins
- triplets
- quadruplets
- quintuplets
- sextuplets
- septuplets
- octuplets

6. PREGNANCY: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'pregnancy'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. A woman in America has given birth to quadruplets. | T / F |
| b. It is the first time ever that all babies survived beyond a day. | T / F |
| c. Several of the babies need special machines so they can breathe. | T / F |
| d. Doctors originally thought there were only seven babies. | T / F |
| e. The mother wants to stay out of the public attention. | T / F |
| f. A doctor said he believed the woman took fertility drugs. | T / F |
| g. The doctor advised multiple births under special circumstances. | T / F |
| h. The chance of having octuplets without drugs is over 15 trillion to 1. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. octuplets | a. enormous |
| 2. tiny | b. chance |
| 3. early | c. likely |
| 4. huge | d. premature |
| 5. discovered | e. advise |
| 6. identity | f. eight babies |
| 7. probably | g. found |
| 8. recommend | h. amazingly |
| 9. unbelievably | i. small |
| 10. likelihood | j. name |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. a mother has delivered | a. boys |
| 2. only the second | b. any circumstances |
| 3. six tiny | c. a secret |
| 4. ranged in | d. fertility drugs |
| 5. the doctors | e. eight babies |
| 6. keep her identity | f. 1 in 80 births |
| 7. whether or not she took | g. weight from 0.68kg to 1.47kg |
| 8. the risks involved | h. time ever |
| 9. I would not recommend it under | i. delivered babies A to G |
| 10. Twins occur in roughly | j. in multiple births |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

A woman in Southern California gave _____ on January 27th to octuplets. It is only the second time in US history a mother has delivered eight babies. It is also only the second time _____ for all octuplets to survive their first day. Doctors said the six tiny boys and two girls were all doing well and _____ on their own. They all arrived nine weeks early and _____ in weight from 0.68kg to 1.47kg. The mother and the team of doctors received a _____ surprise at the end of the birth – an eighth baby. The mother believed she was going to have _____ seven babies (septuplets) before the birth. After the doctors delivered babies A to G, they _____ baby H. The mother asked the nurses: “Really? An eighth baby? How did we _____ that baby?”

There are no pictures of the babies yet. The mother has asked the hospital to _____ her identity a secret. She also does not want the media to find out whether or not she _____ fertility drugs before becoming pregnant. Dr Richard Paulson of the University of Southern California told reporters that the octuplets were _____ because of fertility drugs. He also spoke about the _____ involved in multiple births: “It’s a risky decision to try to have all eight babies. I would not recommend it _____ any circumstances,” he said. He added that the chances of having eight children naturally, without drugs, were “unbelievably _____”. Twins occur in _____ 1 in 80 births; triplets in 1 in 6,400 births. The likelihood of octuplets being born is 1 in 20 _____ pregnancies.

breathing

discovered

birth

huge

miss

ever

just

ranged

under

probably

trillion

keep

roughly

took

rare

risks

LISTENING: Listen and fill in the spaces.

A woman in Southern California _____ January 27th to octuplets. It is only the second time in US history a mother has delivered eight babies. _____ the second time ever for all octuplets to survive their first day. Doctors said _____ boys and two girls were all doing well and breathing on their own. They all arrived nine weeks early and _____ 0.68kg to 1.47kg. The mother and the team of doctors received a huge surprise at the end of the birth – an eighth baby. The mother believed she was going _____ seven babies (septuplets) before the birth. After the doctors delivered babies A to G, they discovered baby H. The mother asked the nurses: “Really? An eighth baby? How _____ baby?”

There are no pictures of the babies yet. The mother has asked the hospital to keep her _____. She also does not want the media to find out whether _____ fertility drugs before becoming pregnant. Dr Richard Paulson of the University of Southern California told reporters that the octuplets were probably because of fertility drugs. He _____ the risks involved in multiple births: “It's a risky decision to try to have all eight babies. I would not recommend _____ circumstances,” he said. He added that the chances of having eight children naturally, without drugs, were “unbelievably rare”. Twins _____ 1 in 80 births; triplets in 1 in 6,400 births. The likelihood of octuplets being born is _____ pregnancies.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'give' and 'birth'.

| | |
|-------------|--------------|
| give | birth |
|-------------|--------------|

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

| | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• history• ever• tiny• ranged• huge• miss | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• pictures• whether• probably• decision• naturally• likelihood |
|--|---|

STUDENT BABIES SURVEY

Write five GOOD questions about babies in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

| | STUDENT 1 _____ | STUDENT 2 _____ | STUDENT 3 _____ |
|------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Q.1. | | | |
| Q.2. | | | |
| Q.3. | | | |
| Q.4. | | | |
| Q.5. | | | |

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

BABIES DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'baby'?
- c) What do you like and dislike about babies?
- d) What do you think is the best number of children to have?
- e) What are the advantages and disadvantages of being an octuplet?
- f) What kind of help do you think the mother in the article will need in raising the octuplets?
- g) Would you have difficulty in naming eight babies?
- h) How would you feel as a parent if doctors delivered you octuplets?
- i) What was the last huge surprise you had?
- j) What feelings do you think the mother had after she found out she gave birth to eight and not seven babies?

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BABIES DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Do you think it's possible for the mother to keep her identity a secret?
- c) What do you think of fertility drugs that can produce multiple babies?
- d) Do you think it would be fun growing up as an octuplet?
- e) What do you think of the idea of using fertility drugs to increase the population of countries with too few people?
- f) Were you a good baby?
- g) Have you taken a risky decision recently?
- h) How do you think you would cope as a parent of octuplets?
- i) If you could, would you choose a multiple birth?
- j) What questions would you like to ask the mother of the octuplets?

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LANGUAGE

A woman in Southern California gave (1) _____ on January 27th to octuplets. It is only the second time in US history a mother has delivered eight babies. It is also only the second time ever for all octuplets to (2) _____ their first day. Doctors said the six tiny boys and two girls were all doing well and (3) _____ on their own. They all arrived nine weeks early and ranged in weight from 0.68kg to 1.47kg. The mother and the team of doctors received a huge (4) _____ at the end of the birth – an eighth baby. The mother believed she was going to have just seven babies (septuplets) (5) _____ the birth. After the doctors delivered babies A to G, they discovered baby H. The mother asked the nurses: “Really? An eighth baby? How did we (6) _____ that baby?”

There are no pictures of the babies yet. The mother has asked the hospital to keep her (7) _____ a secret. She also does not want the media to find (8) _____ whether or not she took fertility drugs before becoming pregnant. Dr Richard Paulson of the University of Southern California told reporters that the octuplets were (9) _____ because of fertility drugs. He also spoke about the risks involved in multiple births: “It's a risky decision to try to have all eight babies. I would not recommend it (10) _____ any circumstances,” he said. He added that the (11) _____ of having eight children naturally, without drugs, were “unbelievably rare”. Twins occur in roughly 1 in 80 births; triplets in 1 in 6,400 births. The (12) _____ of octuplets being born is 1 in 20 trillion pregnancies.

Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.

- | | | | | |
|-----|---------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. | (a) birth | (b) born | (c) births | (d) birthed |
| 2. | (a) survived | (b) survive | (c) survival | (d) survivor |
| 3. | (a) breath | (b) breathe | (c) breathing | (d) breathless |
| 4. | (a) surprises | (b) surprised | (c) surprising | (d) surprise |
| 5. | (a) pre | (b) early | (c) past | (d) before |
| 6. | (a) missed | (b) missing | (c) miss | (d) misses |
| 7. | (a) identity | (b) alias | (c) code name | (d) personality |
| 8. | (a) in | (b) out | (c) up | (d) down |
| 9. | (a) problem | (b) probability | (c) probably | (d) probing |
| 10. | (a) under | (b) inside | (c) behind | (d) over |
| 11. | (a) chance | (b) chancing | (c) chanced | (d) chances |
| 12. | (a) liking | (b) likelihood | (c) liken | (d) likely |

HOMework

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find out more about multiple births. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. OCTUPLETS: Make a poster about the things octuplets will need throughout their lives. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

4. MULTIPLE BIRTHS: Write a magazine article about a couple who has octuplets. What are their joys and challenges?

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

5. ONE OF EIGHT: Write an imaginary conversation between two of the octuplets. One of them likes being one of eight; the other would prefer to be an only child.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s). Role play your conversation in front of the class.

6. LETTER: Write a letter to the mother of the eight babies. Ask her three questions about having octuplets. Give her three suggestions on what she should do to bring them up. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. F c. F d. T e. T f. T g. F h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. octuplets | a. eight babies |
| 2. tiny | b. small |
| 3. early | c. premature |
| 4. huge | d. enormous |
| 5. discovered | e. found |
| 6. identity | f. name |
| 7. probably | g. likely |
| 8. recommend | h. advise |
| 9. unbelievably | i. amazingly |
| 10. likelihood | j. chance |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. a mother has delivered | a. eight babies |
| 2. only the second | b. time ever |
| 3. six tiny | c. boys |
| 4. ranged in | d. weight from 0.68kg to 1.47kg |
| 5. the doctors | e. delivered babies A to G |
| 6. keep her identity | f. a secret |
| 7. whether or not she took | g. fertility drugs |
| 8. the risks involved | h. in multiple births |
| 9. I would not recommend it under | i. any circumstances |
| 10. Twins occur in roughly | j. 1 in 80 births |

GAP FILL:

U.S. woman gives birth to eight babies

A woman in Southern California gave **birth** on January 27th to octuplets. It is only the second time in US history a mother has delivered eight babies. It is also only the second time **ever** for all octuplets to survive their first day. Doctors said the six tiny boys and two girls were all doing well and **breathing** on their own. They all arrived nine weeks early and **ranged** in weight from 0.68kg to 1.47kg. The mother and the team of doctors received a **huge** surprise at the end of the birth – an eighth baby. The mother believed she was going to have **just** seven babies (septuplets) before the birth. After the doctors delivered babies A to G, they **discovered** baby H. The mother asked the nurses: "Really? An eighth baby? How did we **miss** that baby?"

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LANGUAGE WORK

- 1 - a 2 - b 3 - c 4 - d 5 - d 6 - c 7 - a 8 - b 9 - c 10 - a 11 - d 12 - b