

Proof of a twin or multiple pregnancy

Stillborn twin/triplet etc.

In this case everyone will probably know that you once had a twin, but you may not have been told. It may be possible to establish this from medical records. If you have been told, your family may not realise what this loss has meant to you.

Miscarried twin/ triplet etc.

If this was an early miscarriage, it may not have occurred to your parents to tell you. It is possible that no one except your mother knows anything about it. If you have older siblings they may remember your mother thinking she had lost you, but remaining pregnant after all.

One or more episodes of vaginal bleeding in early pregnancy

It is possible that your mother had more than one episode of bleeding, without passing anything recognisable. This may be a sign that more than one embryo was lost.

Conceived by IVF with multiple embryo implantation

It was once usual to implant several embryos at once, in order to increase the possibilities of an IVF pregnancy. If you were conceived by IVF in the early days of IVF, the chances are that you are the survivor of a multiple pregnancy. The incidence of twinning, both identical and fraternal, is increased by IVF.

An ultrasound scan showing embryos that were not born alive or at all

If you were conceived before 1980, it is unlikely that a scan would have been made. You may have been given the scan picture, or it may still be in your parent's possession.

Fetus papyraceous present at birth

If you were born before 1980 it is very unlikely that the presence of a fetus papyraceous would have been noticed, registered or spoken of to your parents. However, there may be something in the birth records.

Presence in your body of cysts and/or other growths containing remains of dead twin

Cysts and growths containing bones, teeth and hair have been found in all parts of the body, even the brain. These are all that remains of an identical twin, who died and was absorbed into your embryonic body as it was being formed.

Remains of other amniotic sac(s) and cord(s) attached to placenta at birth

These days the placenta is examined carefully and the parents informed of any signs of a "vanished" twin. The sac is usually empty but may contain some remains of a twin.

Mother took drugs to stimulate ovulation

When drugs have been taken to stimulate ovulation, the chances of conception are greatly increased. However, the chances of a multiple pregnancy are increased also. This may be undetected if the other embryos die away and "vanish" shortly after implantation or before the first scan was made.

A failed attempt was made to abort the whole pregnancy

Before the 1960s, the most common method of abortion was to puncture the amniotic sac and trigger a miscarriage. Alternatively, various chemicals were applied to the cervix to induce a miscarriage. Otherwise, the mother may have been given some medicine to drink to trigger a miscarriage. The usual method today is either a hormonal drug which induces miscarriage or a surgical operation using a suction tube which removes the contents of the uterus. I have heard of several cases where a twin has managed to survive and has been born alive with no physical ill-effects. There can be bodily damage to the survivor and the psychological damage is usually considerable.

Nodules on placenta

When the placenta is examined, there are sometimes marks on it or nodules attached, which might be clues to the existence of a lost twin. It takes expert knowledge to diagnose a "vanished" twin from this evidence.

Fraternal twins in the family

If there are fraternal twins in your family, the chances of a twin pregnancy are greatly increased. This does run in families. Where twinning appears to miss a generation it may be that there was a twin pregnancy but only one survived. There can be whole families of wombtwin survivors who do not know!

Signs of cerebral palsy

This has been very closely related to being the survivor of an identical pair.*

Birth defects

Any kind of physical defect may have been caused by twinning in the womb.

Mother very large for dates during first trimester but not later on

People often joke about the way a pregnant woman looks in the early months. In many cases it may be true.

Born prematurely

The death of a twin in pregnancy can put the whole pregnancy at risk, especially if the twins are an identical pair.

Identical twins in the family

Left-handedness and dyslexia have been associated with being an identical twin survivor.

* Pharoah P. O. D., Price T S, and Plomin R *Cerebral palsy in twins: a national study.* Archives of Disease in Childhood Fetal and Neonatal Edition 2002;87:F122-F124