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Couple has quadruplets; PEOPLE: Bellingham family size goes from four to eight in one day.

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THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

Korie and Scott Hulford hit their own version of the lottery jackpot Wednesday morning.

The Bellingham couple added two sets of identical twin girls to the family when Korie Hulford gave birth to the quadruplets by Caesarean section at the University of Washington Medical Center in Seattle.

Constance, Emily, Andrea and Anja (pronounced Ahn-ya) were born at just over 33 weeks of gestation, with their birth weights ranging from 3 pounds, 8 ounces to 4 pounds, 6 ounces, according to hospital spokesman Walter Neary.

The odds of spontaneous quadruplets - a pregnancy without the benefit of fertility drugs - is estimated at one in 729,000.

The odds of having "spontaneous" sets of identical twins like the Hulfords' is pegged at an astronomical one in 25 million - making it twice as rare as the one in 11 million odds of hitting the jackpot of the state's lottery game, Lotto Plus.

"It's a lottery of babies," said Scott Hulford, 31, in an interview Wednesday night. "It's overwhelming - in a good sense."

Korie Hulford, 28, has been at the Seattle hospital since June 11 so doctors could keep her from going into labor prematurely, he said. She is doing fine, he added.

More than 22 hospital personnel were in the operating room just to take care of the girls, not including the team of doctors and the anesthesiologist, he said.

"I got to hold two of them who were stable right away," he said. "The other two got whisked away pretty quickly. They are all in the same room, lined up in a row, all in their own incubators."

"They (hospital personnel) even gave them a bath already today," he said. "That's a good sign."

As soon as the four are stable enough to travel - likely a minimum of 10 days - they will be transported to St. Joseph Hospital, he said. They will then spend a few weeks at the hospital before coming home.

A news conference is tentatively scheduled for today with the Hulford family and physician at the Seattle hospital, Neary said. The girls join siblings Michael, 8 and Christopher, 6.

The percentage of multiple births nationwide has increased in recent years as fertility drugs became more available in the 1990s, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

There were a total of 114,307 twin and 6,742 triplet births in 1999, according to the National Center for Health Statistics. There were only 512 sets of quadruplets born nationwide in 1999.

A Kansas family just recently made the news after having two sets of identical twins, also without the use of fertility drugs.

A set of quadruplets translates into about 10,000 diaper changes annually. The family will need to multiply its purchase of infant carriers, cribs and other necessities, like baby wipes. Mom and dad will need to clip 80 toenails and fingernails and increase bath time four-fold.

"They went from a family of four to a family of eight overnight. Oh, man," said Vicky Emmett, a member of the Whatcom Mothers of Multiples, a local group of about 35 moms that is associated with the **Northwest Association of Mothers of Twins Clubs**.

Emmett, a mother of twin 11-year-old boys, does not know the family and hadn't heard of the births until Wednesday. But she had some advice to the family:

"If anybody volunteers to help, take it," she said. "Especially if it's a meal. And laundry. Just knowing there's clean towels and sheets."

The brothers will be a great help, she said. They will be able to run and fetch items, she said. Emmett's group would welcome Korie, she said.

The family has talked to formula maker Enfamil, which has agreed to supply formula, Scott Hulford said. Another local group called Women Helping Others (WHO) has pledged support to help them buy a larger vehicle, he said.

The family is moving out of its Bellingham home and into Scott Hulford's mom's house. Korie's sister is taking a leave of absence from her job to help and both grandmothers will be on hand, as well as cousins and aunts and others, he said.

The family is going to take it one day at a time, Scott Hulford said.

"We were shooting for three and ended up with six," he said. "I doubled my family in one day."

Multiple births more common

Multiple births are becoming more common for Washington state mothers. In the early 1990s, just more than 2 percent of babies born to Washington mothers were part of a multiple birth.

This percentage increased to nearly 3 percent by the end of the decade. One possible reason for the change is the increasing use of assisted reproductive technologies (ART) such as infertility treatment, which increases a woman's chances of having a multiple birth. The 2003 Washington state birth certificate will begin to collect information on the use of infertility treatment, allowing for more detailed analysis.

In 2000, Washington women had about 1,065 sets of twins, 33 sets of triplets, and no sets of quadruplets. In most years, at least one set of quadruplets is born and in 1996 there was one set of quintuplets.

A woman's chance of having a multiple birth increases as she gets older. In 2000, 5.4 percent of babies born to mothers age 40 and older were part of a multiple birth, compared to 1.7 percent of babies born to teen mothers.

Source: Washington State Department of Health.

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