

# Identical vs. Fraternal

## Knowing Twin Type Is Important

By Dr. Nancy L. Segal

I will never forget a pair of adult twins I knew who had been told all their lives that they were fraternal. I will call them Alice and Becky to conceal their names. Alice had always described an extraordinary physical likeness between the two of them, so both were now seriously questioning their diagnosis as fraternal. Alice asked me to help her conduct a DNA analysis so she and her sister would finally know for sure. This issue had caused them considerable unease because everyone thought they were identical -- but when they said they were not they had only their family's report to go on for explanation.

I arranged a DNA test for them and received their results several weeks later. They were identical twins! I sent Alice the results and she wrote back to me that she opened my email message very gingerly, hoping they were identical. It was a celebration when she learned the truth that she had always sensed, but which had been denied. The news gave both twins a profound sense of well-being and understanding.

There are so many reasons for parents to know their children's twin type. Many people know that this is important for assessing the risk of medical conditions should one twin become affected. Often overlooked is the sense of identity and self-knowledge that knowing one's twin type offers to twins, as well as the understanding on the part of their parents, family members and friends.

*Dr. Segal publishes regularly about twins and her latest book, "Deliberately Divided: Inside the Controversial Study of Twins and Triplets Adopted Apart", is available in kindle and audio now.*

*Dr. Segal also has two news books coming out—an annotated collection of photographs she took of the twin survivors of Auschwitz-Birkenau, and an overview of a high-profile legal case involving same-sex marriage, citizenship, surrogacy—and, of course, twins.*



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### The odds of having identical multiples are:

- **twins**                    **1 in 250**
- **triplets**                **1 in 62,500**
- **quadruplets** **1 in 15,625,000**
- **quintuplets** **1 in 3,906,250,000**



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