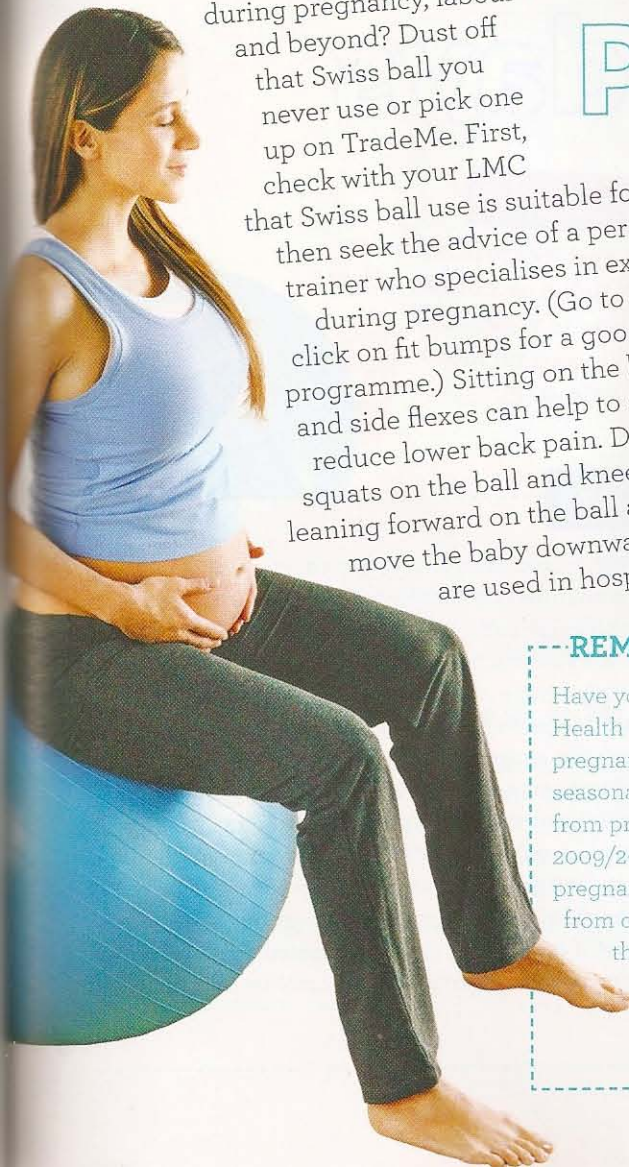


## Re-laaaax

What's the best way to manage contractions during labour? Midwife Cecile O'Driscoll starts with educating women about relaxation rather than breathing. "If you can train yourself to relax during a contraction, your breathing will automatically become slower and more regular. It's like meditating - allowing the whole body to relax. Avoiding hyperventilation is very important, as you may start to get cramps and pins and needles in your extremities from too much carbon dioxide from over-breathing."

## HAVE A BALL

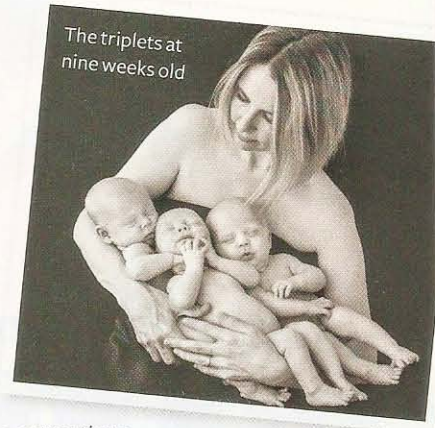
Looking for a bump-friendly exercise plan to benefit you during pregnancy, labour and beyond? Dust off that Swiss ball you never use or pick one up on TradeMe. First, check with your LMC that Swiss ball use is suitable for you, then seek the advice of a personal trainer who specialises in exercise during pregnancy. (Go to [fitfit.co.nz](http://fitfit.co.nz) and click on fit bumps for a good example of a specialist programme.) Sitting on the ball to do pelvic rotations and side flexes can help to strengthen the spine and reduce lower back pain. During labour, supported squats on the ball and kneeling on the ground and leaning forward on the ball are positions that can help move the baby downward for birthing. Swiss balls are used in hospitals and birthing centres.



# 20 SETS OF TRIPLETS WERE BORN IN NEW ZEALAND LAST YEAR\*

Carolyn and Michael Akerboom got the surprise of their lives at Carolyn's 12-week pregnancy scan: identical triplets! Although they were aided by IVF, the odds of triplets developing naturally from just one embryo is approximately one in 6500. Carolyn put on 15kg during her pregnancy, then shed 17kg after birth. In her third trimester she was admitted to hospital with Braxton Hicks contractions and also developed pre-eclampsia symptoms. At 32 weeks she found herself unable to urinate for 24 hours, and a scan revealed two of the three triplets' growth had slowed down. Doctors decided it was time to deliver the babies by caesarean section. "There were two anaesthetists, a surgeon and a midwife, and a lot of other people in the theatre as well," recalls Carolyn. "There were three people per baby waiting in a side room. It was very surreal and calm, and the atmosphere was quite light-hearted." On 17 December 2011, Kieran Michael was born at 10.40am, weighing 1620g. One minute later, Joel Matteo arrived, at 1650g, just ahead of Elliot Peter, at 1395g. After six weeks in the neonatal intensive care unit, the triplets came home safe and sound.

\*Year to Dec 2011



# Pregnancy & birth

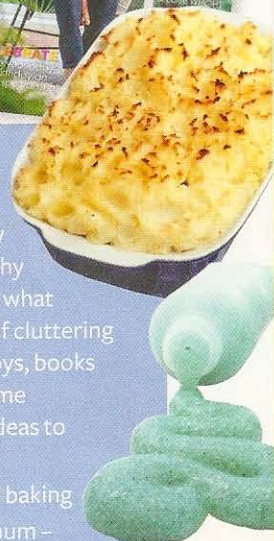
By Frances Chan



## Gift rapt

Whether you have a baby shower or not, don't be shy about dropping hints for what you'd really like instead of cluttering the nursery with more toys, books and clothes. Here are some outside-of-the-box gift ideas to suit all budgets:

- Homemade meals and baking
- Products to pamper mum - lipstick, nipple cream, moisturiser
- Vouchers for a family portrait, a spa treatment, babysitting, high tea
- An astrology chart for your baby or a star named after your baby ([starregistry.com](http://starregistry.com))
- Storage of your baby's cord blood ([cordbank.co.nz](http://cordbank.co.nz))
- And our favourite - a subscription to *Little Treasures!*



## REMINDER: FREE FLU JAB

Have you had your free flu vaccination? Health officials strongly recommend pregnant women vaccinate against seasonal influenza because experience from previous outbreaks and the 2009/2010 pandemic shows that pregnant women are at greater risk from complications associated with the flu. It's best to vaccinate in the second or third trimester. For more information call 0800 IMMUNE (0800 466 863).