

Miracles are hard yakka

Michelle Pountney

JOSHUA, Thomas and Luke are three of life's little treasures.

To parents Nancy and Angelo Gheno, they are their three little miracles and a genetic freak of nature.

The identical triplets were born 13 weeks prematurely, weighing less than 3kg combined.

Luke was heaviest, tipping the scales at 920g. Thomas was 910g. Tiny Joshua was just 780g when the boys were born at the Royal Women's Hospital on October 11.

Mrs Gheno was nine weeks pregnant when a scan revealed she was expecting triplets and as the babies were sharing one placenta it was known immediately they were identical.

Some experts have claimed identical triplets occur once in every 10-20 million births. But there are at least three sets in Melbourne, including two born in the past year.

"I was shocked but my husband was delighted — he thought it was the greatest thing that ever happened," Mrs Gheno said yesterday.

Because the three shared one placenta, there were fears she could lose them.

Mrs Gheno spent three months in bed rest at home, and three months in hospital before the boys were born at 27 weeks gestation.

Doctors decided to deliver the boys when they saw Joshua had stopped growing and had lost size and weight.

Despite their size, the feisty trio fought from the very start and encountered a few minor



Three of a kind: identical triplets Thomas, Joshua and Luke Gheno have started crawling. Picture: DAVID CAIRD

— but no major — setbacks during 13 weeks in hospital.

The boys came home on January 8 — the day they were supposed to be born.

Since then, the Gheno family have been in and out of hospital, with all three boys suffering bronchiolitis and respiratory infections common in babies but dangerous for premature infants.

The family have received support from Lifes Little Treasures, a support group for parents of premature

babies. Spokeswoman Parool Shah said it was important to provide support, education, guidance and an opportunity to meet other parents.

The number of premature births in Victoria continues to slowly increase, with about 5700, or 8.2 per cent of all births, occurring prematurely in 2006.

This Friday is National Premmie Day to raise awareness of premature births.

Net link: www.lifeslittletreasures.org.au



Lost size: Joshua weighed 780g at birth.