

Chilean doctors begin operation on Siamese twins

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A Chilean medical team Tuesday began an operation to separate 10-month-old Siamese twin girls joined at the chest and pelvis in one of the most complex procedures ever in the South American nation.

A 25-member medical team began the operation early Tuesday at the Hospital Luis Calvo Mackenna in the capital, a procedure expected to last at least 12 hours. After the separation, each of the girls would then undergo additional surgery, doctors said.

Hospital director Osvaldo Artaza said the operation on the girls identified as Maria Jose and Maria Paz was unprecedented because of its complexity, "but we have no choice from the point of view of [quality of life](#) and [life expectancy](#)" of the two girls.

"We have to be very clear in stating that one can die, or both," Artaza said. "The medical team has set the goal of saving both."

The operation includes the separation of the thorax, liver, [intestines](#) and [pelvis](#) and then reconstruction of tissues. Afterward, both girls will need additional interventions.

In the first four hours, the operation had gone smoothly.

"So far things are going well and as scheduled," said chief of medical surgery Francisco Ossandon in a preliminary medical report.

In 1993 two Siamese twin boys were separated successfully in the same hospital in an operation that lasted more than 10 hours.

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