Tips for Caring for More than One Baby

Caring for your new babies will be exciting, but it can also be very tiring. For this reason, it is important to have a lot of support. Ask for help from friends, relatives, religious organizations, or a reliable teenager from your neighborhood. Tell them the type of help you need, such as household chores, feeding the babies, or to just have a break from your daily routine. Do not try to be super parents, ask for help.

Feeding

Your decision to breast or bottle feed should be based on what method best meets the needs of you, your babies, and your family. Remain flexible.

- The feeding method you choose during your pregnancy may need to be changed to better meet your needs and your babies’ needs.
- While breast milk is best, talk with your bedside nurse, lactation specialist, La Leche League, or baby’s doctor for questions you may have about feeding your babies. A combination of breast and bottle feeding, or supplement feeding may be needed.
- You may find it easier to put your babies on the same feeding schedule, so you can rest while they are sleeping. You may choose to breastfeed one child and bottle feed the other, switching at the next feeding time.
- If you choose to feed them separately, and one cries while feeding the other one, offer a pacifier, rock them in an infant carrier, or try singing.

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding more than one baby is possible. Be patient with yourself and your babies while you learn to coordinate breastfeeding.

- Eat nutritious foods, drink plenty of water and have some help at home, so you can rest while you establish and maintain your milk supply.
- Talk to your bedside nurse or lactation consultant about positioning when breastfeeding. A special breastfeeding pillow, which fits around your waist, allows two babies to lie on either side of your breasts and feed together.
• Start off breastfeeding one twin at a time until breastfeeding is going well. When each baby can latch on correctly, you can begin to put both babies to breast at the same time. Nursing both babies at the same time saves you energy and time.

• If one baby has a stronger sucking reflex, have that baby breastfeed first. This helps with milk flow and makes feeding easier for a twin who has a weaker sucking reflex.

• Breastfeeding compressions can be done to help the baby with a weaker sucking reflex to feed better. Place your thumb at the top of your breast and other fingers under your breast. Use your thumb to apply pressure to the breast every time your baby sucks and then release. If you need help, talk to your nurse or lactation specialist.

Bottle feeding

By holding the babies close to you and making good eye contact, you can have the same feeling of closeness while bottle feeding as with breastfeeding. If your babies eat slowly, ask your nurse to show you other holding positions and ways to help your babies eat better.

• Try to make enough formula for at least 24 hours, if you have room in your refrigerator. Mix the formula and place it in a pitcher with a closed lid, or pour the formula into bottles and store them in the refrigerator.

• If you pour the formula into bottles, only pour the amount the babies are taking at each feeding to reduce waste. You will also need at least 8 bottles per baby for a 24 hour period.

• Warm the formula before giving it to your babies. Do this by placing the bottles in hot water and letting the water warm the formula to room temperature. While waiting for the formula to warm, use your time wisely by changing diapers and getting your babies ready for feeding. **DO NOT use the microwave to warm the bottles.** This can create hot spots, which can burn your baby’s mouth.
Diapers

Choose whatever type of diaper, disposable or cloth, that best meets your needs. Using cloth diapers can save money, but you need to have access to a washer and dryer, and washing them will take lots of time. Pre-folded diapers, 2 dozen for each baby, will get you through at least two days. Some parents choose disposable diapers because they require less work.

Bouncers, booster seats and high chairs

You can use baby bouncers for short periods.

You can begin to use booster seats or high chairs when your babies have good head support, which occurs around 6 months of age. These chairs will allow them to explore their world and to interact with each other when they are placed side-by-side or face-to-face.

Stroller

There are several types of strollers to choose from:

- A side by side stroller has the babies lie or sit next to each other.
- A seated front-to-back stroller allows the babies to lie down, or sit up at various levels.
- In a face-to-face, stroller the babies sit facing each other
- Umbrella strollers that are attached can be used when your babies are sitting up and have good head support.

A stroller that holds more than one baby allows you to run errands and enjoy walks during nice weather. Consider how much space you have in your car when you buy a stroller. Try out the strollers in the store to see how it folds down and make sure it will fit in the car. Always secure your babies with the stroller's seat belts.

Toys

Babies born together learn to share and take turns earlier and more easily than single children do. You do not need to have two of each toy. Babies, however, should each have one toy to play with.

- As your babies get older, you may decide that each child should have his or her own toys and a separate place to store them.
- Consider dividing the toys and storing them in plastic laundry baskets to rotate their playing time. Store some and play with others. Rotate toys every few months.
Brothers and sisters

The birth of more than one baby at the same time can be difficult for other children in the family. Sisters and brothers soon learn that the babies tend to attract attention wherever they go. They also require lots of work and occupy much of Mom and Dad’s time. Here are some tips:

- Introduce big brother and sister to visitors first, before introducing the babies. Talk about the brother or sister’s recent accomplishments.
- Spend 5 minutes of your time when a child needs you. This will be more helpful than spending an hour when it is a better time for you.
- Plan special times with grandparents, friends, or relatives to give the brother or sister a chance to feel special.
- Spend time alone with the other children and do one-to-one activities, like read a story or take a walk. Use sitters or friends to watch the babies for you.
- Talk to your older children about their feelings. Try to keep calm and understand that behaviors, such as wetting, thumb sucking, and nail biting are temporary responses to the stress of having new siblings.

Helpful hints

- It can be hard to remember everything the first few weeks. Do not trust your memory. Write it down. Keep several lists, such as:
  - In the first few weeks, write down the babies’ feedings and number of wet and dirty diapers for 24 hours.
  - Keep a shopping list of must have supplies for babies and the family.
  - Keep a list of questions and concerns for your babies’ doctor or your doctor.
  - Write down dates of developmental milestones, such as smiling, babbling, sitting, crawling, etc. You may want to use a first year calendar.
  - Simplify your housework. Do not try to clean your house in one day. Cleaning one room a day, and break it up into small jobs. Accept help with cleaning. Do not feel you have to do it alone.
- More than one baby is much harder to keep an eye on than a single baby as they can go in opposite directions quickly. Make your home as safe as possible. Safety gates and play pens provide safe play areas. Post emergency phone numbers such as the Poison Control Center by each phone.
- Rest when your babies sleep during the day. Having more than one baby means having more feedings during the night unless you feed them together. Put older siblings down for naps or quiet time, so you can rest too. By resting or sleeping when your babies sleep during the day, you can reduce the stress of the daily routine.
Swings may also be helpful when your babies need to be soothed. If the babies become upset, 5 to 10 minutes in the swing has been shown to be calming.

If you have identical babies or fraternal infants who look very similar, you may worry about how to tell them apart. Use a different color nail polish on a toe nail or stitch initials in a piece of their clothing to help identify them. Soon after birth, you will not have problems as even identical babies have differences.

Resources

Web Resources

- **Columbus Mothers of Twins Club:** Annual membership includes monthly meetings with speakers, playgroups, parties, and early access to semiannual clothing and equipment sale, which is open to the public. For more information, visit [www.cmotec.weebly.com](http://www.cmotec.weebly.com).

- **La Leche League:** Provides meetings and access to leaders for breastfeeding help and information. Visit [www.lllohio.org/groups/columbus.html](http://www.lllohio.org/groups/columbus.html) for meeting and leader contact information in Columbus and surrounding cities.

- **Mothers of Multiples East Columbus:** Members have access to monthly meetings with speakers, group activities, and a semiannual clothing and equipment sale. For more information, visit [www.facebook.com/mothersofmultiples](http://www.facebook.com/mothersofmultiples).

- **Raising Multiples:** A national organization that offers support, education and research on higher-order multiple births. For more information, visit [www.raisingmultiples.org](http://www.raisingmultiples.org).

- **Twins Day Festival in Twinsburg, Ohio:** An annual festival held the first full weekend in August to celebrate all multiples. For more information, visit [www.twinsdays.org](http://www.twinsdays.org).

Print Resources

- **Twins Magazine:** A subscription magazine for parents published 6 times a year. For more information on subscribing, visit [www.twinsmagazine.com](http://www.twinsmagazine.com).

- **Notebook Magazine:** A subscription magazine for parents of multiples published 4 times a year. For more information on subscribing, visit [www.multiplesofamerica.org](http://www.multiplesofamerica.org).

- **Emotionally Healthy Twins** by Joan A. Friedman, ISBN 9780738210872, DaCapo Longlife publisher.


Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.
For more health information, contact the Library for Health Information at **614-293-3707** or e-mail health-info@osu.edu.

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