

# PREPARING FOR PARENTHOOD

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS EXPECTING  
TWINS, TRIPLETS OR MORE...





In times of change, our focus remains the same. If you need legal advice and support, we're here, just like we've always been.

**So you're able to focus on what really matters.**

# PREPARING FOR PARENTHOOD

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Twins  
trust.

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We totally understand how **precious** your little ones are. As parents of premature twins **we also spent time in neo-natal units** and it was an emotional rollercoaster.

I remember wanting to change the world to make it a **safer and kinder** place for my tiny babies. I didn't change the world, but I did find a way of keeping babies **safe and comfortable on every journey.**

Our Morrck Baby Hoodie was developed from the reality of getting out and about with multiples and needing an **easy, simple** and most importantly **safe** way to travel.

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[hello@morrck.com](mailto:hello@morrck.com)



# HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET



If you are expecting twins, triplets or more, this booklet is for you, whether you are first-time parents or already have children. It points you towards sources of help and suggests some questions to ask. It is intended to complement the information you get from your midwife, health visitor or doctor. You don't need to read it all in one go; dip in and out as it suits you.

We have included lots of quotes from parents of multiples. They have been through the changes you will soon be experiencing in your family and have lots of advice for you.

**“ Comments, experiences and advice that parents of multiples have shared will be shown like this in the booklet.**

Look out for the 'pit stop' boxes: points where you might want to take a minute to reflect and think about what you might want to do, or how you will plan for your babies.

## Pit Stop Box



- Pit Stop boxes like this will appear throughout the booklet. They will feature topics that we think would be worth taking time to think about and reflect upon. They may help you make decisions or plan ahead.

This booklet doesn't include information about the tests or screening you'll be offered, or about labour or delivery. That information can be found in Twins Trust's Healthy Multiple Pregnancy Guide. You can get a copy by visiting the Twins Trust website. With these booklets you'll be well prepared for the arrival of your babies.

## TOP TIP

*The most useful tips we have to offer you will be shown like this throughout the booklet.*

Whilst every care is taken in providing information, please note that it is of a general nature and that readers should seek professional or expert advice as appropriate to their specific circumstances. Twins Trust does not accept liability for any error or omission.

PREPARING FOR PARENTHOOD

# INTRODUCTION



Finding out that you are having more than one baby can be exciting and overwhelming at the same time. Twins Trust is a national registered charity which supports families like yours who are expecting twins, triplets or more. We understand the unique challenges you face and are here to help you.

This booklet has been put together to support you from the start of your journey through pregnancy until your babies are around six weeks old. It will help you to explore how you are feeling, how your pregnancy affects your relationships, how to take care of yourself, what support is available, how you can get to know your babies and take care of them. It also tells you about the common illnesses that all babies can get and what to look out for.

Twins Trust ([www.twinstrust.org](http://www.twinstrust.org)) has lots more support services to help you. We mention specific services throughout the booklet and we hope these will help you to prepare for your new arrivals and give them the best start possible.

**Keith Reed**

Chief Executive  
Twins Trust



# Twins trust.

We support  
twins, triplets  
and more...

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**No.1**  
PREGNANCY  
SUPPLEMENT  
BRAND\*

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every step  
of the way



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- ✓ Most recommended by midwives<sup>1,2</sup>

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**VITABIOTICS**

1. For more information on this research, please visit [www.pregnacare.com/mostrecommended](http://www.pregnacare.com/mostrecommended). 2. Based on a survey of 1000 midwives. 3. *Journal of the American College of Nutrition*, Vol.18, No.5, 487-489 (1999). 4. A beneficial effect can be obtained from a maternal daily intake of 200mg DHA in addition to the recommended daily intake of 250mg DHA / EPA for adults - Annex of Commission Regulations (EU) No. 440/2011. \*UK's No.1 pregnancy supplement brand. Source: Nielsen GB ScanTrack Total Coverage Value and Unit Retail Sales 52 w/e 7 September 2019. To verify contact Vitabiotics Ltd, 1 Apsley Way, London NW2 7HF.



# SECTION ONE:

## EXPECTING MORE THAN ONE BABY (EMOTIONS)

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*This section covers how you can start getting to know your babies during pregnancy, explores your hopes and worries, relationships and family matters.*

Becoming a parent of twins, triplets or more is a very special experience.

On some days, you will be excited about the future and feel very special. At other times, you might start to worry at the very thought of bringing home more than one baby and wonder how you will manage.

“ I was thrilled when they told me. Absolutely thrilled. It was days before my feet touched the ground.”

“ I thought: Oh my goodness, how am I going to cope?”

“ I was really pleased, but kept thinking about the practicalities. Will we need a new house or a new car, and will I be able to afford to go back to work?”

You will learn that you are the most important people in your babies' lives. As your pregnancy progresses you have the opportunity to think about how you feel, what changes you can expect, and how you will manage while gaining the confidence to learn about your babies and to love them. It is important to remember that all families are different and it's important not to compare what might be right for other families, with what is right for your own family.

### TOP TIP

*Find a local Twins and Multiple Births Club and try to visit when you're pregnant. You'll get ideas and support from parents who have been through this themselves. Visit the Twins Trust website to find details of your nearest club.*

# GETTING TO KNOW MY BABIES BEFORE THEY ARRIVE

## The early relationship with your babies can start when you are pregnant.

Ultrasound scans show that babies in the womb yawn, exercise, move about to get comfortable, sleep and suck their thumbs. Pictures of your ultrasound scans may help

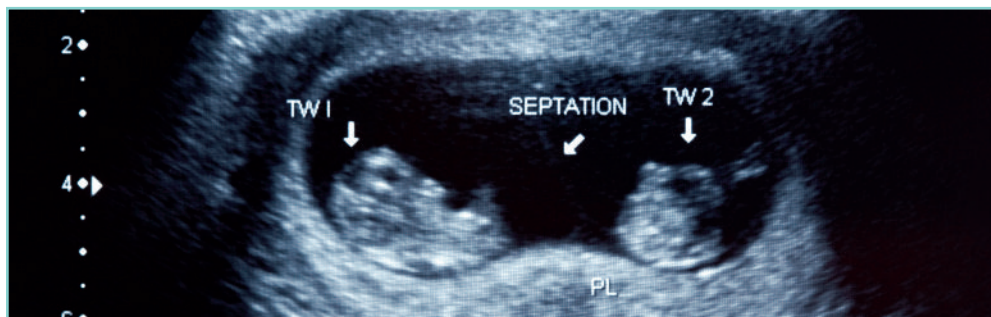
you feel how real your babies are.

An unborn baby begins to respond to sound from around 18 weeks. He or she can recognise voices in the womb, and parents' voices will be the most familiar. So your babies are listening to you.

## Think about how to bond with your babies before they are born...



- I am going to take time to sit, stroke or talk to my bump.
- When they move, can I tell them apart? I know that not all mothers can.
- I will put on some of my favourite music and notice whether they are more active or whether they go off to sleep.
- What will their personalities be like?
- Babies love songs and nursery rhymes. I will sing a few songs to my babies.
- What names will I choose for them?
- Anything else I can think of...



## EARLY BONDING WITH MY BABIES

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Bonding with babies can start in pregnancy. At birth, the hormone oxytocin helps to create a deep early connection between the mother and babies. Some parents might worry about how they will feel when their babies are born, and be anxious that they will not experience bonding in the way that they expect.

Babies are usually ready to bond from birth, but for parents it might help to think of bonding as a gradual process that builds over time and can be different for everyone.

As your pregnancy progresses, and after your babies are born, your confidence will grow and you'll find your own way of getting to know your babies. If you already have children, you will perhaps recognise and have experience of this already.

Some of the questions and concerns in the 'Hopes and Worries' diagram opposite may have gone through your mind. If so, you are not alone. The hopes and worries you have for your babies are important, as they can influence the choices you make and affect how you feel about your babies.

### TOP TIP

*Register on the Twins Trust website for the Pregnancy Countdown Tool to find out what you should be expecting at each stage of your pregnancy.*

**[www.twinstrust.org](http://www.twinstrust.org)**

### TOP TIP

*Twins Trust runs Practical Preparing for Parenthood courses, webinars and specialist antenatal courses. For more details visit the Twins Trust website. Also, ask at the hospital where you go for antenatal check-ups if there are courses for parents expecting multiples.*

Often we set ourselves very high expectations and then feel we have failed. Having more than one baby is a challenge, and it is important to be realistic and not to be too hard on yourself.

It can help to talk to other mothers who have been through a multiple pregnancy, or any close friend or family member who you trust. Choose someone who won't judge but will listen, help you explore some of your thoughts and reassure you. Don't forget you can also talk to your midwife, health visitor or family nurse practitioner.

**For a friendly voice on the phone, you can speak to another parent of multiples through the Twins Trust helpline: Twinline 0800 138 0509 open Monday to Friday 10am-1pm and 7-10pm.**



## HOPES AND WORRIES

*Will we be good enough parents to our twins?*

*How will I manage to still spend time with my older children, while looking after new born triplets?*

*How long will it take to bond with my babies?*

*Will I love my babies equally?*

*My friend said having one baby was hard - how will I cope?*

## MAKING TIME FOR RELATIONSHIPS

Becoming a parent is one of the most important life changes we can experience. The change is more obvious for mothers, who need to adapt quickly to the changes in their bodies and understand how hormones

influence how they are feeling. Partners may feel left out and need time to think about their feelings, what their role will be and how they will manage the demands on them.

### TOP TIP

*Thinking about how changes in your relationship may affect you will help you plan and prepare for your life after the birth. Twins Trust have produced a factsheet for partners which you can download from the Twins Trust website.*



## Some of the concerns that expectant partners may have...

*Will we have enough money to support us?*

*How can I help during labour?*

*Will we both get up in the night?*

*Will we have time on our own together when the babies arrive?*

*Will I still have time for my hobbies?*

*How can I be a good parent?*

## FAMILY MATTERS

For first-time parents, there is the change from being 'me and you' to 'parents' as you

become 'a family'. This can feel overwhelming for a range of reasons.

### Some of the worries you might have...

#### **PARTNERS**

Partners might worry about how to fulfil their two roles of supporting their partner and becoming a parent themselves.

#### **MOTHERS**

Mothers might worry about being expected to know what to do instinctively and to take the lead in childcare.

Talking about these worries during the pregnancy might help you to be less stressed and able to focus on getting ready for your babies.

Sharing how you feel will help you both to adapt to your changing roles as parents, while still having time for each other.

Both parents can take time to think about or write down (together or independently) what might be hard when your babies arrive, and how you can try to prevent it... ●●●

- I'm no good if I'm tired and need a break. I am going to ask my partner if they can manage while I have a nap.
- We will make sure that we talk to each other if one of us feels that they are doing more than the other.
- If I want to go to the match at the weekend, I'll suggest I could take the twins out Saturday morning so we both get a break.
- What if she loves the triplets more than me? I'll talk to my partner, give her a cuddle and tell her what I'm worried about.
- I'm worried sex may hurt. I'll try and talk to my partner about how I feel.
- I'm worried that we'll never have time on our own and although I know this will get better when things are more settled, I'll make sure I tell my partner that I do love them.
- Add your own...

Here's some advice a parent of twins has to offer:



**Talk to each other.**

**When the babies arrive ask for help, and take it when it's offered. Don't stress, and take one day at a time.**

**Every day you'll learn something new, and time goes so fast that you'll soon be more capable than you thought you would be.**

**Ignore silly comments about 'double trouble' and 'rather you than me': it is hard work, but so rewarding!**

**Above all enjoy the babies that you've brought into the world. You've done something very special and should be very proud of achieving that!"**



## OTHER ROLE CHANGES

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When you are expecting multiples there is usually a great deal of interest from friends and family, grandparents and work colleagues. There will be adjustments and role changes for many of those in your close circle as your babies' arrival time gets closer.

It's likely that many people will be keen to share their experiences and give you advice and information.

Sometimes this can be overwhelming and possibly even unwanted.

**Remember, they are your babies and they instinctively know you the best. In turn, you'll get to know what they need and make the choices that you feel are best for you and for them.**

You might develop new friendships with other expectant parents who you meet at clinic appointments, or online. You'll find good opportunities to share each other's

experiences and talk about how you are feeling. One mother of twins shares her experiences here:

“ I made new friends at my local Children's Centre. I was so lucky to be befriended by a lovely mum of twins during my pregnancy, who subsequently came round and took me to the local twins and multiples group, despite having twins of her own to look after. I used to look forward to Friday mornings so much, as being in the company of loads of lovely mums of twins (and a couple of dads too) made so much difference.”





## SECTION TWO: HOW DO I PREPARE?

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*This section introduces the various types of support you might need and the people who might be there to help you, from family and friends to the range of health professionals you'll meet.*

*This section also covers other practical aspects of preparing for your new arrivals: what equipment you might need, how to prepare financially, how long you might want to carry on working for, what to think about if you are a one parent family, how to prepare older children and so on.*

### PRACTICAL & EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

When you know you are expecting multiples, your thoughts will quickly turn to what support you'll need and who will be around to help. Everyone's circumstances are different; all parents need different types of support and the people who are there for them may vary.

Before you start thinking about who will be there for you, it's worth spending a few minutes thinking about the different types of support you may need.

Many new parents rely on their close family and friends for help. Being pregnant also

brings you into contact with other expectant parents through hospital appointments, Antenatal preparation groups or online.

#### TOP TIP

*Don't be afraid to accept offers of help. Give people ideas for specific practical tasks that they could help you with.*

Think about who would be able to give you some support, either with practical things like bath time and getting out of the house, or by giving you a break for an hour...



- I'll talk to my midwife or family nurse practitioner about my worries about coping.
- I'll find out if Home-Start has volunteers in my area.
- I'll find out if there is a local Children's Centre and see what support is available.
- I'll look on the Twins Trust website for details of local Twins and Multiples Clubs.
- I'll ring Twinline.
- I'll find out if there is any breastfeeding support in my area.
- I'll ask at the local Jobcentre Plus about benefits and financial advice.
- I'll check out social media and get some tips from others in the same position.
- I'll work out if I can afford to pay for help at home, even if it's just for the first few weeks.
- Any other ways I could get some support...

Many parents worry that they don't have family close by and won't be able to afford

paid help, but this parent of multiples shows you that it is possible to survive:

**“ In a perfect world you would have lots of people around you to help in the early days, but circumstances and finances don't always allow this.**

**My husband was home with us for one week and then my mum was able to help for a few days here and there.**

**I would say to anyone expecting multiples, if you can't afford private help, as we couldn't, that's fine. It really is possible to cope. Just take each hour as it comes, praise your small successes and try to get out of the house, even just for a short walk.”**



## PRACTICAL SUPPORT

### **During pregnancy:**

Knowing about maternity and paternity leave and pay, and how you manage your finances; discussing with your consultant about the method of delivery you are likely to have; visiting the hospital or other chosen place of birth and going to parentcraft or antenatal classes.

### **At the birth:**

Being kept informed about what is happening.

### **In the early days of parenthood:**

Working out how to change nappies, feed and bath more than one baby; how to get out of the house; how to keep older children involved and happy.



## EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

### **During pregnancy:**

Sharing your thoughts about having more than one baby.

### **At the birth:**

Having someone who is there for you.

### **In the early days of parenthood:**

Sharing how you are feeling: you might be exhausted, but happy and excited about your babies.



## SOCIAL SUPPORT

### **During pregnancy:**

Sharing the changes that are happening and letting everyone know that you are expecting multiples.

### **At the birth:**

Having somebody to let you know what is going on and keep you informed about progress.

### **In the early days of parenthood:**

Having somebody around who can help you at home and help you to get out and about. Ideally someone who will be an extra pair of hands without giving unwanted advice.



## WHO CAN HELP WITH WHAT?



Looking at the picture above, we've suggested some people in the inner circle who may be able to give you help or support. Think about your own circumstances and list the people who you could ask.

Also think about what type of support they may be able to give: there are suggestions in the outer circle.

How do you feel about asking for and receiving help? Are you very independent, used to getting on with it and coping? Do you prefer to do everything yourself so that you can stay in control?

Being pregnant with multiples can at times be

demanding and you might find it difficult to stay so independent.

Asking for and receiving support is not a weakness, it is just a fact of life, and sometimes you simply need more than one pair of hands.

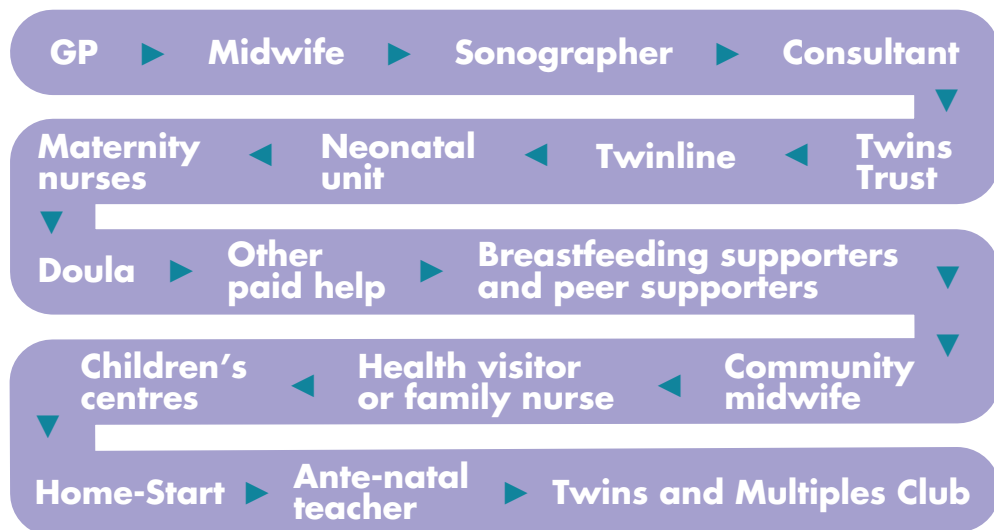
## Asking for help will...



- Bring me closer to my friends;
- Give me someone to talk to;
- Help others to understand what it's like to have more than one baby;
- Provide an extra pair of hands, especially at bath time;
- Make me feel less isolated;
- Provide a listening ear;
- Give us more time with our older children;
- Provide support and might make me less likely to have post-natal depression;
- Allow my partner and I time together as a couple.

The picture below introduces some of the health professionals who have a role in looking after you during pregnancy and who

can offer advice and support when your babies are born.





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\*The retail price of £85 is available to Twins Trust members when using a relevant discount code. This offer cannot be used in conjunction with any other discount or promotional offer. NorthGene reserve the right to modify, cancel and limit any promotion or offer at our sole discretion. All material is copyright NorthGene and material cannot be published in any form without prior written approval by NorthGene.

## WHAT ABOUT QUESTIONS AND GETTING INFORMATION?

How do you feel about asking for and receiving help? Are you very independent, used to getting on with it and coping? Do you prefer to do everything yourself so that you can stay in control?

Being pregnant with multiples can at times be

demanding and you might find it difficult to stay so independent.

Asking for and receiving support is not a weakness, it is just a fact of life, and sometimes you simply need more than one pair of hands.

### Questions you might find helpful to ask...



- How long will I need to stay in hospital after my delivery?
- What tests will I be offered and when do I have them?
- Can I visit the Special Care Baby Unit before my babies are born in case they need to spend time there?
- How do I find a local breastfeeding peer supporter?
- Is there a Twins & Multiples Club nearby?
- Will my partner be able to stay in hospital with me after delivery?
- Are there antenatal classes run locally for parents expecting multiples?
- Other things I need to know...

## WHAT ABOUT FINANCIAL SUPPORT?

The precise details of the financial support and benefits that you may be entitled to can and does change. Everybody's circumstances are different and it can be very confusing.

To get the most up-to-date information, check the Department of Work and Pensions website. If you haven't got internet access,

leaflet NI17A-A Guide to Maternity Benefits will tell you all you need to know, including what happens to your maternity pay if your babies are born early. Your local Jobcentre Plus or Citizens Advice Bureau will have this, and more information.

When you are expecting multiples, you only



get the same allowances as you would if you were having one baby. The exception to this is the Sure Start Maternity Grant. Unlike mothers expecting singleton babies, you might still be eligible for a grant if you have already had a baby. To be eligible you need to be receiving certain benefits and on a low income. Visit [www.workingfamilies.org.uk](http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk) or [www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk). To apply see here: [www.gov.uk/sure-start-maternity-grant/how-to-claim](http://www.gov.uk/sure-start-maternity-grant/how-to-claim).

If you receive universal credit or tax credits and have one child already and then have twins, triplets or more, you may be eligible for support for all of them. It can be complex so worth checking: [www.gov.uk/universal-credit](http://www.gov.uk/universal-credit) and see [www.workingfamilies.org.uk/articles/tax-credits-and-universal-credit-if-you-have-more-than-two-children/#exceptions](http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk/articles/tax-credits-and-universal-credit-if-you-have-more-than-two-children/#exceptions). Even if you are not eligible for the additional child element for each of your babies you may be eligible for help with childcare costs for all of them under universal credit and tax

credits. If you are on a low income and do not currently claim universal credit, then you may like to consider making a claim - you can check your eligibility using a free online benefits calculator: [www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators](http://www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators).

If you live in Scotland you may also be eligible for other benefits:

Best Start Grant - if you are expecting multiples and you are in receipt of certain benefits and on a low income you can get separate amounts for each baby, plus an additional supplement - the value differs depending on whether you already have a child under 16 in the family. Visit [www.workingfamilies.org.uk/articles/best-start-grant](http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk/articles/best-start-grant) and [www.mygov.scot/best-start-grant-best-start-foods](http://www.mygov.scot/best-start-grant-best-start-foods).

Also see [www.parentclub.scot/baby-box](http://www.parentclub.scot/baby-box) to claim a baby box for your multiples and [www.mygov.scot/neonatal-expenses-fund](http://www.mygov.scot/neonatal-expenses-fund).

Here are a few areas affecting your finances that you may want to look into in more detail...

CHILD  
BENEFIT

STATUTORY  
MATERNITY  
PAY &  
ALLOWANCE

PARENTAL  
LEAVE

UNPAID  
LEAVE

SURESTART  
MATERNITY  
GRANT

TRAVEL  
COSTS TO  
AND FROM  
HOSPITAL

OTHER  
BENEFITS OR  
ENTITLEMENTS

## HOW LONG SHALL I CONTINUE WORKING?

If you are working, the decision about when to stop is very individual, depending on the demands of your job, your personal finances, and if you are working full or part time.

Discuss the options with your partner and your employer, and ask the doctor who is

managing your care if they are happy for you to carry on. With more than one baby your bump will grow faster, which might affect how comfortable you are at work.

This is what some mothers of multiples found:

“ At 32 weeks my bump was too big to sit comfortably at my desk. I also had sciatica and insomnia, so I was more than ready to finish by then.”

“ I finished work at 33 weeks and the boys were born two weeks later. I had lots of annual leave saved up to ensure that I could finish early.”

“ I stopped working at 22 weeks because I was on my feet all day and doing heavy lifting.”

## HEALTHY START

Healthy Start provides vouchers for free milk, fresh fruit and vegetables for mothers from 10 weeks pregnant until their children are four years old. To qualify, you have to be receiving certain benefits or under 18 years old. Ask your midwife or doctor for an application form or apply online at [www.healthystart.nhs.uk](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk)

### TOP TIP

*Expectant mums are entitled to free prescriptions and free NHS dental care whilst they are pregnant and for 12 months after the birth. Fill in form FW8, which you can get from a doctor, midwife or health visitor.*

## WHAT WILL I NEED AND WHAT SHOULD I BUY?

Having twins, triplets or more can be very expensive as you'll need more than one of certain items. As long as you are sure that they're clean and safe, you might want to consider getting some items second-hand from Twins and Multiples Clubs, websites such as eBay, Preloved and Gumtree or local Facebook pages.

Car seats should not be bought second-hand unless you are sure of their history, and cot mattresses should also be bought new.

Here is a list of suggested equipment, but of course you don't have to buy everything.

## PACKING FOR HOSPITAL: IDEAS FOR YOUR CHECKLISTS

### FOR YOUR LABOUR

- ✓ Maternity notes
- ✓ Birth plan
- ✓ Facial spray
- ✓ Phone/tablet/laptop
- ✓ Chargers
- ✓ Books and magazines
- ✓ Snacks
- ✓ Unsweetened juice/water
- ✓ Food for birth partners
- ✓ Night-shirt or something similar to wear in labour

### FOR YOUR STAY IN HOSPITAL AFTER BIRTH

- ✓ 2 nightdresses with front opening for breastfeeding
- ✓ Light dressing gown
- ✓ Slippers
- ✓ Socks
- ✓ 2 loose cotton tops
- ✓ 2 pairs of stretchy trousers
- ✓ 2 nursing bras/support bras
- ✓ Toiletries
- ✓ Towels (including face towel)
- ✓ 2 packs of disposable briefs/comfy underwear
- ✓ 24 maternity pads
- ✓ Pack of breast pads
- ✓ Pack of tissues
- ✓ Anti-bacterial wipes
- ✓ If bottle feeding, a starter pack
- ✓ Syringes of harvested colostrum if you've harvested colostrum from 36 weeks (speak to your health professional about harvesting colostrum)
- ✓ Clothes for going home

## FOR YOUR BABIES

- ✓ Pack of nappies (correct size) or re-usable nappies
- ✓ Bag of cotton wool balls or sheets
- ✓ 3 vests per baby (short sleeved)
- ✓ 1 blanket per baby
- ✓ 3 babygrows per baby, perhaps with integrated scratch mitts (check sizing, front opening may be better)
- ✓ Baby clothes for going home

## TOP TIP

*You may want to consider packing three bags for hospital: one for the labour/birth, one for the babies and one for you.*

## GETTING READY FOR YOUR BABIES AT HOME: IDEAS FOR YOUR CHECKLISTS

### NURSERY EQUIPMENT

- ✓ Moses baskets (one for each baby)
- ✓ If you buy the baskets second-hand you'll need new mattresses that fit exactly. Mattresses for Moses baskets, cots etc needs to be firm, flat and waterproof
- ✓ 1 cot or cot bed (if co-bedding), or multiple cots/cot beds if your babies are going to sleep separately. Please see page 49 for information on co-bedding multiples.
- ✓ Baby sleeping bags (check manufacturer's guide for sizes; these are usually suitable from 4kg, 8.8lbs) or use some blankets/sheets
- ✓ Bouncy chairs for feeding and entertaining
- ✓ Changing mats (if you live on 2 floors, get 1 for upstairs and 1 for downstairs)
- ✓ 1 baby monitor
- ✓ Selection of toys
- ✓ 1 baby bath or baby bath supports
- ✓ Baby towels
- ✓ Muslin cloths
- ✓ Baby gym
- ✓ Blackout blinds/curtains might be useful
- ✓ Dimmer switch or night light
- ✓ Room thermometer
- ✓ Ear thermometer
- ✓ Lidded bins for used nappies

More checklists for home ►

## TOILETRIES FOR YOUR BABIES

- ✓ Nappies
- ✓ Cotton wool pads
- ✓ Skincare toiletries
- ✓ Nail scissors/clippers (baby sized)
- ✓ Baby wipes (not recommended for the first 6 weeks)
- ✓ Breast pads
- ✓ Maternity pads
- ✓ Top and tail bowl or something similar to use for washing babies

## ITEMS FOR FEEDING

- ✓ A double nursing pillow
- ✓ Nipple cream
- ✓ Electric double breast pump, if expressing breast milk (can be hired)
- ✓ Bottles and bottle brush (6-8 bottles per baby)
- ✓ Steriliser: steam/microwave/cold water or sterilising fluid
- ✓ Powdered milk if bottle feeding
- ✓ Muslin cloths
- ✓ Bibs
- ✓ Nursing bras

## BABY CLOTHES

- ✓ Vests and babygrows
- ✓ Jackets and cardigans (or snowsuits if winter)
- ✓ Hats

## FOR GOING OUT

- ✓ Infant car seats (one per baby)
- ✓ Buggy (raincover/footmuffs)
- ✓ Changing bag/rucksack

Other items you can think of...

## TOP TIP

*If people are asking what they can buy for you, put together a gift list or ask for vouchers to avoid getting duplicates.*



## BUYING SUGGESTIONS

FROM PARENTS OF TWINS, TRIPLETS AND MORE...

“ My best buys were bouncy chairs; we couldn't have managed without them.”

“ Invest in a good buggy that will suit your lifestyle, making it easy to go out and about from the start.”

“ Stock up on nappies when they are on special offer before you have your babies (check online price comparison sites).”

“ Only buy what you really need as babies grow out of things so quickly, and borrow as much as possible.”

“ Buy clothes in the next size up, in the sales or second-hand.”

“ I bought four travel blankets for car seats and prams for my twins and couldn't be without them.”



## BUGGIES

Your buggy will be one of your most important purchases, so do your research. Check that it will fit into the boot, if you have a car, and through your doorway. Ask other parents of multiples for recommendations.

**Side-by-side or tandem?** This is a personal choice. Here's what other parents think:

“ I got a side-by-side as I didn't like the idea of one baby staring at the back of the seat in front. We had a side-by-side that could face me or face the other way. I wanted my twins to be next to each other so that they could see what was going on at the same time.”

“ I chose a tandem to start with, which had car seats that could be clicked in and out easily. I swapped to a side-by-side when the babies got heavier.”

“ I wanted a buggy where both babies faced towards me so that I could interact with them as I was told that this helped with development.”

“ We started with a tandem with removable car seats as it went through doorways and we could transfer the babies from the buggy to the car without waking them.”

For more information on which buggy might work for you, check out the conversation, including our survey, on the Twins Trust Community Forum: [www.twinstrust.org/forum](http://www.twinstrust.org/forum).

## OTHER TIPS FROM PARENTS ON PREPARING FOR MULTIPLES

- Stock up on basic food items
- Batch cook meals for the freezer
- Think about the logistics of your home, for example, where will your babies sleep in the daytime?
- Wash the babies' clothes and bedding before they arrive
- Declutter your house
- Consider whether you need to change your car
- Sort out finances (from applying for benefits to writing a will)

# I'M A ONE PARENT FAMILY

Some parents are one parent families by choice, others may have become one through circumstances. There will be challenges for all

parents of multiples, but if you're going to be a one-parent family it's even more important to plan ahead.

## OTHER ONE PARENT FAMILIES OF TWINS, TRIPLETS AND MORE **SHARE THEIR WISDOM...**

“ I learnt you can't be Supermum to multiples and have an immaculate house. If the Hoover isn't put round for a few days, then so be it. If the washing piles up, who cares? It'll get done when you can. Most importantly, your babies need caring for.”

“ Planning and organisation was key for me as a dad on my own. Be positive as much as you can. Don't be afraid to ask for help from friends, and family, for example, taking the children for a walk while you rest or recharge your batteries, or babysitting once a month while you meet the lads or go to the match. You have to allow more time to get the children ready to go out. Make the effort to get out, especially if you've not got a lot of space at home.”



Twins Trust has a factsheet and a Facebook group for one parent families.

For more information email [support-team@twinstrust.org](mailto:support-team@twinstrust.org)

## WHAT ABOUT MY OTHER CHILDREN?

The birth of multiples can be exciting for older siblings, but some may be a little worried about the idea of sharing family life with new babies. There are many things you can do to prepare your older children for their new siblings.

- Try to spend some time with your older children before the babies arrive. Perhaps you could involve them in choosing a coming home outfit or buying a welcome toy or present.
- It's your decision when to tell younger children that more babies are on the way, but some children might appreciate being involved at an early stage. Think about showing them scan photos.
- You could also read them a book about becoming a sibling to younger children.
- Praise your older children often so that they continue to feel valued.
- Think about buying some toys and books to keep your older children amused when the babies are at home. Perhaps these could be given as gifts from the new babies.
- Plan to keep the rest of family life as normal as possible when the new babies arrive. For example, nursery, pre-school or school should continue as normal.
- Arrange for a family member or trusted friend to look after older children while you are in hospital. If possible, have someone on standby in case of emergencies. If you can, get your children used to spending time with these people before the babies arrive.
- If you need to go into hospital during your pregnancy, try to ensure that your older children have an opportunity to visit.
- Once the babies are home, think about how you would like your older children (and other family members/visitors) to handle them.

### TOP TIP

*Try not to feel guilty about having less time to give your older children individual attention. Remember that even if you were having just one new baby, your other children would still need time to adjust.*





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SnoozeShade is the world's best-selling range of sun and sleep shades. Invented by a British mum, it launched in 2010 and is endorsed by baby sleep experts and has won over 70 awards worldwide. The best bit though? SnoozeShade products help babies to establish and maintain healthy sleep habits when you're on-the-go and also protect babies from the sun, insects, wind and chill.

Visit [SnoozeShade.com](http://SnoozeShade.com) to learn more about our products  
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Great customer service is very important to SnoozeShade so if you want to know what product will work best for your children, just get in touch by email on [customercare@snoozeshade.com](mailto:customercare@snoozeshade.com)



0-6 mths

SnoozeShade Original



0-6 mths

SnoozeShade  
Car Seat Canopy



0 mths +

SnoozeShade makes  
sharing a room easier



# SECTION THREE:

## NOW THAT MY BABIES ARE HERE (HOSPITAL)

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*This section gives you some ideas about what to expect in hospital so you can prepare for what might happen when you meet your babies.*

For many parents, the hours that follow the birth, when you meet your babies for the first time, are a time to be savoured and enjoyed. It is a time of wonder, amazement and physical closeness; an experience that can be enhanced through skin-to-skin contact.

Sometimes the circumstances of the birth might mean that it is not possible for you to

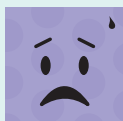
experience this closeness immediately after birth, if, for example, your babies need to go into neonatal care. Please don't worry about this, as there will be lots of opportunities for physical closeness later on.

If you feel that it would be helpful to have a debrief of your birth, do ask the midwives or your consultant to talk about it with you.

Depending on how things have gone, parents often feel a mixture of...



**Joy**



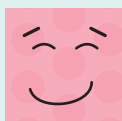
**Anxiety, fear or  
disappointment**



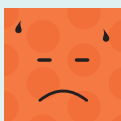
**Happiness  
and relief**



**Uncertainty**



**Closeness**



**Soreness and  
discomfort**



**Exhaustion**

## LOOKING AFTER MY BABIES IN HOSPITAL

After your babies are born, if they are well, they will be with you in cots at your bedside. Depending on the hospital, you may be offered a separate area or private room which will probably be quieter and give you more space, in which to get to know your babies.

Don't be afraid to ask the staff on the ward for help. It can feel a bit intimidating, especially if they seem busy, but they are

there to support and look after you and your babies. Ask about your partner staying after visiting hours or even overnight, as an extra pair of hands and support may be useful. Sometimes it is better that a partner goes home for a good night's sleep so that they are refreshed and more able to help the next day.

Some parents of multiples have shared what helped them in hospital:

“ My partner moved the furniture around in my bay on the ward as I needed more room.”

“ My hospital let my partner stay. He had to sleep in a chair but it was helpful to have him there.”

“ A private room meant that I could set my alarm to feed and express, without having to worry about waking others up.”

“ I took extra food in: the meals were too small as I was breastfeeding.”

## WHAT IF MY BABIES NEED NEONATAL CARE?

Multiple births are more likely to require neonatal care than singletons, due to high levels of prematurity, low birthweight and other complications.

The time they spend there varies a great deal depending on the care each baby needs. It may just be for a few days, but could be longer. It may even be that you are discharged and one or all of your babies are still in hospital.

It is hard to predict any of this and you can feel helpless and sometimes even wonder if you could have done anything different or prevented any of it - these feelings are common.

Any questions or worries are best shared and it will help to talk to the experienced doctors, midwives and nurses who are looking after you and your babies.

## TOP TIP

*Before your babies are born, see if your hospital will allow you to visit the neonatal care unit. A pre-arranged visit can make neonatal care less scary if your babies do need to be treated there.*

Neonatal care units are staffed by specially trained nurses and doctors who will be able to give your babies the care they need. They can be intimidating as there is a lot of specialised equipment, incubators, tubes and wires needed for tiny babies who may be poorly.

Most neonatal care units take photographs soon after babies are admitted. This can help make it feel real for you and you can share the experience with your family and friends. Kangaroo (or skin-to-skin) care - putting your baby or babies on your bare skin - can help with breastfeeding, weight gain and bonding.

It may also be the case that one baby needs extra support and the other/s is/are fine.



“ Having twins at 26 weeks was a battle I never expected to have to overcome. When they were tiny (1lb 13oz and 1lb 9oz) each day was really tough, especially not knowing how the nights would go. Many tears were shed.

Over the time in neonatal care, I chose to think positively, be there for my girls and learn as much as I could each day. I found this helped me be more involved in their care.

I would say to parents in similar situations: keep your head held high as there is a little baby/ babies that need you.

Ask questions: no question is silly, especially when it involves the care of your kids.

My little girls are 15 months old now and doing really well. They are little fighters.”

## TOP TIP

*Twins Trust has a guide on Neonatal Care written in conjunction with Bliss. Bliss is the UK charity for babies born premature or sick.*

# WHAT IF I'M SEPARATED FROM MY BABIES?

Hopefully all will go well. However, if you are separated from one or more of your babies after they are born it can be upsetting. Many parents of multiples don't get the chance to hold their babies for several hours or maybe days, if one or more need neonatal care. Being separated from one or more of your babies feels strange. It may be that you feel that you can't believe that they are yours.

It can be difficult to divide your time between your babies if one of them is not beside you. You may have older children too which makes things especially tough.

This feeling of being divided can stir up a whole range of emotions. You may be concerned, even

frightened about the baby that's not at your bedside and guilty that you can therefore spend more time with your other new baby/babies. These feelings are all normal.

All you can do is make the best use of the time you have with each baby, listen to your instinct, decide for yourself who needs you most, and look forward to when you can all make up lost time together at home. Although it depends on the level of care they require, there is lots that you can do to look after your babies in neonatal care, such as talking to them, washing, cuddling and feeding. This will all help you to get to know and bond with your baby or babies.

One mum of twins has shared her neonatal care experience:

“

Our twins were born at 34 weeks, and spent 12 days in special care. At first it didn't feel real. I didn't get to see them until the next day, but my husband took some photos to show me which helped.

It felt strange asking the nurses for help to hold the babies at first because of all the wires, but we soon got used to what the alarms meant, and were able to

change nappies, carry out basic care, help with tube feeds and start the breastfeeding process. It all became second nature really quickly.

With an older one at home, I asked to be discharged as soon as possible, so I could spend time with him too.

I was there for him at breakfast and bedtime, and spent all day in neonatal

care with the twins while he was at nursery or with his grandparents. I felt more relaxed being able to sleep in my own bed, even if I did have to wake up in the middle of the night to express milk, and I think that helped my recovery.

There were some good days and bad days, and it was a rollercoaster of emotions, but we got there in the end.”

If your babies need more intensive care they may be looked after in a more specialised unit, which may not be near your home.

When their condition improves they should be transferred back to your local hospital as soon as there is space.

## HOW WILL I MANAGE IN HOSPITAL?

---

This can be a difficult time for parents of multiples. As a mother you will be recovering from the birth and as a partner you will be juggling your time, work and supporting the mother while you both try to get to know your babies.

You will probably feel under a lot of pressure. It's a good idea to think ahead about how you will cope and who will be around to support you, particularly if you have older children at home.

### Here are a few suggested questions to ask your healthcare team...



- Can my partner stay with me after my babies are born?
- When do I get pain relief?
- Do you have breastfeeding cushions and pumps I can borrow?
- Can my partner bring in extra food for me?
- Do I press the buzzer when my babies are hungry, as I will need help when they need a feed?
- How soon can I see my babies in the neonatal unit?
- What is the policy about older siblings visiting the neonatal unit as it's important we are together as a family?
- Can you please tell us how our babies are doing and what the next steps are in their care?
- Can I touch my babies while they are in the incubator?
- While my babies are in the neonatal unit we want to be involved and help with their care as much as possible - can you support us to do this?
- Skin-to-skin contact with my babies is important to me - how soon can I do this?
- Can I come to the neonatal unit whenever I want to?
- Will you let me know if there is any change in my babies' conditions?
- Any other questions...

## SECTION FOUR: CARING FOR MY BABIES AT HOME



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*This section focuses on getting to know and looking after your babies. It will briefly introduce tips on how you can encourage their early development and discusses feeding options. Along with this there are suggestions about managing daily routines, sleep, coping with crying and, most importantly, looking after yourself.*

You have reached another huge milestone: bringing your babies home! Most parents will feel a mixture of excitement and fear. Don't panic: you will establish your own way of managing your new life as you get to know and understand your babies and learn to take care of them.

Remember there's no single way of taking care of multiples. You will adapt to your new family and develop ways of doing things that suit your circumstances.

It's worth thinking through a few basics before your babies arrive, so you are prepared.

### **WHAT ABOUT TRANSPORT HOME?**

Dealing with car seats is a challenge and on the first few trips you'll wonder if it will ever get easier. If you are taking your babies home from hospital by car you will need a car seat for each baby.

If you are travelling by taxi, most taxi companies will require you to have seats. The rules are that children under the age of three can travel without a child's seat in the back seat of a licenced taxi or minicab. However, check with your local hospital beforehand on their policy as some hospitals will not let you leave unless you have car seats. You'll need to check the fitting of your car seats before your babies arrive.

For more information on the safe fitting of car seats go to [www.gov.uk/child-car-seats-the-rules](http://www.gov.uk/child-car-seats-the-rules).

### **WHO WILL BE WITH ME/US?**

Another pair of hands is definitely useful. See if your partner can arrange time off work, or ask for help from friends or family.



## BONDING WITH MY BABIES

Bonding can be described as the intense emotional attachment between parents and their baby. You'll remember from the first section of this booklet to think about bonding as a process that may take time to develop.

### WHAT CAN AFFECT BONDING?

Most parents bond really well with their new babies, so don't worry. But you may be anxious that bonding with more than one baby will be difficult as you have less time to spend with each one, and even more difficult if you also have older children.

You may worry that you will not be able to bond with more than one baby or that you won't be able to tell them apart. Some parents have shared that they had a favourite or preferred baby, especially if one cries more. Parents who have had babies after IVF may find it particularly difficult to admit they are struggling with bonding, perhaps feeling that they had wanted to have a family for so long that they shouldn't express any negative emotions.

Partners can feel overwhelmed and may feel left out in the early days.

All of these feelings are normal. Some parents of multiples explained their feelings:

**“ In the beginning I didn't feel any sudden gush of love for the twins. I think it was just because I was too worried about them.**

**For me bonding was gradual, but it only took a few weeks and by then I loved them to pieces.”**

**“ I wish I'd known that it might take time to get to know my babies, just because there are two of them and one of me!**

**I felt desperately guilty that I couldn't spend as much time with each baby as I felt I should. I would suggest that you spend as much time with each baby as you can, and not feel guilty.”**

On the next page there are some small things you can build in to your day that will help you feel closer to your babies. They can also be very special moments for you to share.



Think about how you'll make time for each baby to help you feel closer to them...



- I'll hold each baby next to my skin and gently touch and stroke their skin.
- I am going to cuddle and get to know each of my babies individually, and make time for housework later.
- We'll use their names and recognise the special characteristics of each baby.
- I'll ask relatives or friends to help so I have more time at bath time with each baby.
- We'll talk to each baby individually. Perhaps we will have a separate nursery rhyme for each baby to sing at nappy changing time.
- We'll smile and make eye contact with each baby so they get to know us too.
- Any other ideas...

## FEEDING MY BABIES

### FEEDING CHOICES

There is a great deal of evidence that 'breast is best' for mothers and babies. This is especially true for multiples, who may be born early, as breast milk gives them essential nutrients to support their growth.

Breastfeeding also reduces the risk of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome). Breastfeeding for at least two months halves the risk of SIDS, but the longer you continue, the more protection it will give your babies.

Decisions about feeding can be very emotional, and with multiples there are additional practical considerations. **Each family needs to do what is best for them.**

Before your babies arrive, you need time to think about your feeding options and what you would like to do. Share your thoughts with your midwifery team so they can support you.



## Spend some time thinking about how you would like to feed your babies and the questions you have...



- Will I produce enough milk for my multiples?
- What's the best way to feed them: in tandem or one at a time?
- Are there breastfeeding supporters locally who can visit me at home?
- Is breastfeeding painful?
- How often will my babies need to feed?
- No-one in my family has breastfed before and I'm under pressure to bottle-feed as everyone tells me it's easier - is it?
- If my babies go into a special care unit, will they be given formula feeds?
- Can I combine breastfeeding with formula feeds so I can get some rest?
- I'd like to know how and when it's best to express milk so that my partner can help with feeding.
- Any other questions you have...

### BREASTFEEDING MY BABIES

It's important to know that you can successfully breastfeed multiples, and that it is possible to produce enough milk for your babies.

There are many advantages to breastfeeding - there is no sterilising, the milk is always at the right temperature and there are health benefits for both mum and babies.

This is what some mothers of twins have to say about breastfeeding:

### TOP TIP

*If you have problems with breastfeeding you might find it helpful to talk to a breastfeeding peer supporter by emailing [breastfeedingsupport@twinstrust.org](mailto:breastfeedingsupport@twinstrust.org). You can also sign up for a Twins Trust breastfeeding webinar: [www.twinstrust.org/courses](http://www.twinstrust.org/courses)*



**Breastfeeding twins was one of the most rewarding things I've ever done. It was difficult in the beginning but I'm so glad that I persevered."**

“ I got lots of questions from people as to when I was going to move to bottles, suggesting that I didn't know how much my girls were getting, but I ignored them or educated them in the art of breastfeeding.

**Definitely have your partner as your gatekeeper and support. Breastfeeding is most successful when you have lots of support around you.”**

Twins Trust has further information on its website including a booklet for members called 'Breastfeeding More Than One'. It has lots of information about feeding premature

babies, positioning, latching on, supply, expressing, tandem feeding, mixed feeding, feeding in public and frequently asked questions.



### WHAT ABOUT MIXED FEEDING?

Some parents combine breast and bottle: babies can be given formula milk and/or expressed milk feeds from a bottle.

It is recommended that you wait for six

weeks, until your milk supply is fully established, before starting mixed feeding. Replacing breastfeeds with formula will reduce milk supply.

Parents who used mixed feeding share their experiences overleaf.

“At teatime my partner would give the babies a bottle to give me a break from breastfeeding. I would breastfeed them then he would give them another bottle late evening. This gave me a break and gave him some time to bond and cuddle the babies.”

“We used to give the babies one bottle of formula a day, given by their dad in the evening.”

“I introduced a bottle at about seven weeks. I then got them into a routine of bottle followed by bath and sleepsuit. I then gave them a breastfeed before they went to sleep and bingo, we were in a bedtime routine which worked well.”

## WHAT ABOUT BOTTLE FEEDING?

You may decide to bottle feed your babies, or circumstances may mean you have to bottle feed them.

If you are bottle feeding, you can still have closeness with your babies by having some one-to-one feeds. You can also feed babies together using pillows or bouncy chairs (make sure each baby is secure). Make each feed up as you need it and follow the Department of Health guidelines on how to make up feeds safely. Remember, you shouldn't leave a baby alone with a bottle, or leave a bottle propped up in a feeding position.

For advice on formula feeding and making up feeds, please visit [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk).

Unicef's Baby Friendly Initiative at [www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly](http://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly) has several useful guides, including information on responsive bottle feeding.

Parents of multiples have shared their experiences of bottle feeding:

“We bottle fed. It was a real help being able to share the feeding load with my husband, as in the early days we took shifts to cover night feeds and that worked well for us and meant we could both get small chunks of sleep.”

“I used different coloured or patterned bottles, or different brands; this way I knew how much each baby had had for their feed.”

“ I wanted to bottle feed, as this is what I did for my older child and it worked well for me. Bottle feeding meant that others could help me.”

## WASHING, CHANGING AND DRESSING MY BABIES

The following information will help to get you thinking about how you'll manage your babies' day-to-day care. Some parents will be used to looking after babies and young children, while other parents may feel anxious, especially if they have not had much contact with babies before.

The main thing is not to worry;

### TOP TIP

*If you find the early weeks of being a new parent difficult you can get support from your midwife, health visitor or GP. Sharing experiences with other new parents can help too - Twins Trust has forums for parents:*  
**[www.twintrust.org](http://www.twintrust.org)**

they are your babies so you will instinctively get to know what they want and how to handle them. You'll be surprised at how quickly you pick skills up from watching other more experienced parents, with support from your family and friends, midwives or health visiting team.

### WASHING AND BATHING MY BABIES

You don't need to bath your newborn babies every day. You'll get into your own routine but will probably find that two or three times a week is fine, or maybe you'll give them baths when you know you have some help.

### TOP TIP

*If possible, try alternating babies at bath time with your partner. This will provide an opportunity for you both to get to know each baby and have some one-to-one time.*

You should bath your babies individually until they can sit unaided.

You may wish to bath them on different nights so that you can have some individual time with each baby. It's important to remember that babies should never be left unattended in the bath. You can use your elbow to test the temperature of the water.

### CHANGING NAPPIES

How often your babies poo and what it's like depends on how you feed them.

Breastfed babies tend to poo at each feed and the stools are runny and not as smelly, whereas bottle-fed babies may not poo as often but their poos are firmer (although babies should never have formed stools like adults) and tend to be smellier. You'll get to



know what is normal for your babies.

Get everything ready before you start to change your babies' nappies. Using cotton wool and warm water to clean their skin will keep the cost down. Keep your changing bag topped up with nappies, nappy bags and spare clothes, so that it's ready when you want to get out and about.

### **DRESSING MY BABIES**

Make things easier for yourself by keeping

## **TOP TIP**

*Keeping extra nappy changing gear upstairs, downstairs or in another room will save you running around all day.*

everything simple at first without fiddly fastenings, and buy items that don't need to be ironed!

It may help to change and dress your babies on the floor. (If you have had a C-section it is important to avoid bending too much in the early weeks). You'll be amazed at how quickly babies move about and roll, and on the floor there's nowhere to fall.

## **GETTING OUT AND ABOUT**

**“** We wanted to get out of the house with our girls as soon as we could so, on our first day home from hospital, we popped the girls in their new pram and walked the short distance to our local Chinese to collect our dinner that night.

The same week we went out with the girls into town to get used to getting the pram in and out of the car.

Sometimes, you win at getting out and about and other times you don't. You learn when to accept that going out isn't going to work and that's ok, and embracing the times when you can manage it.”

Getting out of the house can be a challenge but many parents of multiples say that getting out, even for just a short walk, it is worth the effort.

To make it easier, try to be organised - keep the buggy, slings and changing bag packed and easily accessible.

See if there are any local Twins and Multiple Births Clubs or other local baby activities - they help you to meet people and feel less isolated.

**“** At first just going to a coffee shop while they slept was such a treat. Strangers making a fuss of us was appreciated. Getting some fresh air was also good. Even getting out in the rain made me feel like I had achieved something.”

# AWARD WINNING DELICIOUS AND NUTRITIOUS BABY AND TODDLER FOOD



- ✓ Purees
- ✓ Yoghurts
- ✓ Meals
- ✓ Finger foods
- ✓ Smoothies



\* For a recycling bag, please visit [littlefreddie.com](http://littlefreddie.com)

**GETTING OUT AND ABOUT** *(continued)*

“ I did try and get out as soon as possible after my twins were born. Going out in the buggy was a way of soothing them and it helped to get them into a regular pattern of napping as they often fell asleep if we went out.

It was so good for my sanity. I would always get stopped by people who were delighted to see baby twins and they would always say lovely things about them and me and that gave me a boost, even on the toughest days.”

“ Getting out was really important for my physical and mental health. Even just a walk around the block helped. It was also important for my toddler and I felt that being outside every day helped the babies to develop an idea of day and night.

Using a twin carrier with the babies really helped. I could go out without the buggy and push my toddler on the swings while they slept on me.”

“ After I had my twins the days felt very long and lonely if I was in all day.

I got out walking as much as I could; we live by the sea, so I was always pounding the seafront!

I think it definitely helped my well-being to be out, not just the fresh air but the twins always had a good nap in the pram too, so it was a time of calm.”

“ I had to do the school run, so I had to get out of the house. I would make sure the nappy bag was ready by the door and try to do something between feeds.

In the early days I would go round to friends so they could help with feeds. As time went by, I would go to baby groups.

Finding a multiples group was a real game-changer for me. Being around people who understand what it's like to have multiples helped massively in my confidence and mental health.”

## GOING TO THE BABY CLINIC

You will need to go to the baby clinic to get your babies weighed or for their immunisations but it is worth asking, especially at the beginning, if a health visitor

can visit you at home or if you can make an individual appointment instead of having to attend the regular clinic. If your clinic discourages buggies, ask if they can make an exception as you have multiples.

## SAFER SLEEPING

### REDUCING THE RISK OF SIDS

Sadly, we don't know why some babies die suddenly for no apparent reason from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Nobody likes to talk or think about SIDS, but we want you to have as much information as possible so you can reduce the risk.

We know that placing a baby to sleep on their back reduces the risk, and that exposing a baby to cigarette smoke or overheating a baby increases the risk.

All the advice that we now have for reducing the risk of SIDS and other dangers, such as suffocation, are listed overleaf. Remember that SIDS is rare, so don't let anxiety stop you enjoying your babies' first few months. But do follow the advice overleaf to reduce the risks as much as possible.

### TOP TIP

*If your bedroom is not big enough for two cots, you could use one cot bed and co-bed your babies (following our feet to foot advice). A cot bed is bigger than a normal cot and you can adapt it to become a single toddler bed later on. Also, think about taking furniture out of your room for a while to make more space.*



## How to reduce the risk of SIDS...



- Place your babies on their backs to sleep, in a cot or a Moses basket, on a firm, flat mattress that has a waterproof cover.
- Keep your babies in the same room as you for the first six months.
- Do not smoke during or after pregnancy and keep your babies in a smoke free environment.
- Never sleep with your babies on a sofa or armchair.
- Do not let your babies get too hot. Keep their heads uncovered indoors.
- Do not use pillows or duvets for babies under one year old.
- Place your babies in the 'feet to foot' position (with their feet at the foot of the cot/bed).
- Many parents of multiples use baby sleeping bags. Advice includes:
  - Make sure the bags are the right size for your babies' weight.
  - Use hoodless bags with the correct size opening at the neck so your babies won't slip down inside the bag.
- Choose lightweight bags to help prevent overheating (you should not need extra bedding).
- Do not share a bed with your babies if:
  - you have recently drunk any alcohol;
  - you or your partner smoke;
  - you have taken any drugs that have made you sleepy or less aware; or
  - your babies were born prematurely or very small (before 37 weeks or weighing under 2.5kg or 5 ½ lbs at birth).

### TOP TIP

*Safer sleep guidance should be followed for all sleeps including naps during the day.*

## FEET TO FOOT

The Lullaby Trust has put together the following guidance on co-bedding twins. Co-bedding means sharing the same sleep surface for any sleep period.

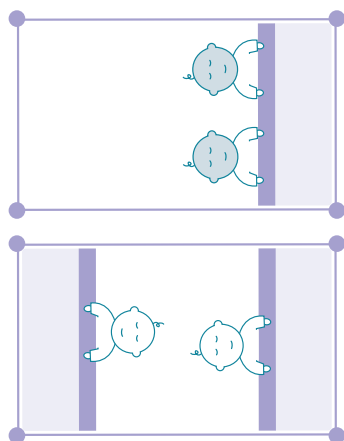
- Never put multiple babies in a single Moses basket or crib: these are too small and may cause your babies to overheat.
- Only place babies side-by-side in the early weeks, when they can't roll on to each other, and make sure they are not close enough to touch and potentially obstruct each other's breathing.
- It might be good to start placing your sleeping babies at opposite ends of their cot from the beginning - in the feet to foot position - with their own bedding firmly tucked in.
- There's no need to use rolled up towels, pillows or anything else between their heads. Cot dividers are not recommended

as all of these items can be potential hazards.

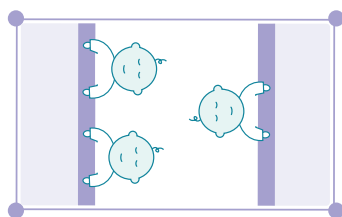
- Once either baby has started to roll put the babies into separate cots.
- Follow the safer sleeping advice for single babies too - it applies to multiples, whether they are sharing a cot or not.
- Babies who are born prematurely (before 37 weeks) or who weighed less than 5.5lbs (2.5kgs) at birth are at a higher risk of SIDS. It's even more important that safer sleeping advice is followed if your baby was born prematurely or was a low birth weight.
- There has been no specific research on co-bedding triplets and higher multiples. If you choose to co-bed triplets or higher multiples, make sure you keep a very close eye on them, separate them when they get more mobile and make sure that they do not get overheated.

*Babies in neonatal units are under constant supervision, so how your babies sleep in hospital may be different to how they should sleep at home. Once at home, please follow our safer sleeping advice.*

### FEET TO FOOT - when your babies' feet are at the foot of the cot/bed...



TWINS in the 'feet to foot' position



TRIPLETS in the 'feet to foot' position

*If you have triplets or more, you may need to separate them into different cots/beds earlier than you would with twins, so they are not forced to sleep too close together.*



## AND SO TO SLEEP

---

It is probably fair to say that sleep (or lack of it!) is one of the biggest issues with any new baby. Having multiples means it can take that bit longer to get a feel for your babies' sleep patterns and get a routine established.

There are many reasons why multiples might be harder to settle, including:

- They spent time in a special care baby unit;
- You have only been able to bring one baby home and are trying to divide your time;
- Premature babies have tiny stomachs and need to be fed more frequently;
- There are several people helping, which can be unsettling as the babies adapt to each person's touch; or
- They may sense from you that you want them to settle quickly so that they don't disturb the other baby.

All babies are different and some babies sleep more than others. Some parents have said that it helped them to take the lead from their babies rather than trying to make the babies go to sleep. Other parents put their babies down to sleep together.

It is normal for newborn babies to need frequent feeding and soothing at night and sleep deprivation is part of being a new parent.

Parents of newborn multiples have shared some of their experiences of sleep:

**“ We limited visitors in the early weeks so we could catch up on sleep. ”**

**“ I always managed a little sleep; a few spells of 40 minutes.**

**I would feed one straight after the other if they weren't both awake.**

**As we did mixed feeding, my partner would take over between 5am and 7am so I got a solid two hours which doesn't sound a lot but worked for me.”**

**“ The lack of sleep in the beginning is a shock to the system but you do get used to it.**

**I survived my consistently inconsistent sleepers, by embracing those night time cuddles; they are little for such a short time.**

**Try to rest when you can. Washing and cleaning the house can wait. Tag team with your partner if you can.**

**Be honest with each other if you are struggling and ask family and friends for help if you need it.”**

“My husband and I used to take sleep shifts to cover the night feeds. One of us would go to bed early, leaving the other to do the last two feeds before bed, then put the babies to bed, usually around 11pm. Then the sleeping partner would swap and do the night shift. We both got chunks of sleep, albeit small, and it seemed to work better than us both being up all night.”

“Sleep in the early weeks was minimal! We found feeding both babies when one woke helped but we really relied on the support of family and friends to take the babies and our toddler for an hour or so here and there so we could rest.”

Often the choices you make and what you do are determined by your own circumstances: for example, if you have older children who you need to spend time with, or if you are on your own.

There are lots of books written about sleep, but too much information can be confusing. Remind yourself that it will get better, and most importantly try to get as much rest as you can so that you can cope.

## TOP TIP

*Sleep deprivation is hard and can cause stress. Try to get help. Perhaps share the feeds if you're bottle feeding or, if you're breast feeding, keep their cot/s close to your bed. Try to sleep when the babies sleep. It will get better!*



## More sleep tips...



- If it suits you to have a bedtime routine (for example, bath, feed and cot), stick with it. About 12 weeks is a good time to start a routine.
- Many parents of twins put their babies to sleep in one cot at opposite ends (feet to foot) especially if they started doing this in hospital.
- Frequent feeding and night waking is normal during infancy. In the early days you may want to synchronise night feeds so if one baby wakes up you can feed the other(s) at the same time. Be prepared for one baby to sleep through before the other(s).
- If you can, put your babies down to sleep when they are awake. This way they'll learn to settle themselves. But don't worry if your babies need to be held while going to sleep.
- Newborn babies cannot distinguish between night and day, this starts to happen by two months but babies will still be waking frequently for night feeds at this age.
- To help your babies learn the difference between night and day feeds, keep the room dark and quiet at night.

**Twins Trust has a series of factsheets on safer sleeping and sleep expectations. Visit [www.twinstrust.org](http://www.twinstrust.org).**



# FINDING THE BEST ROUTINE

Routines can be good for you and your babies as they find it soothing to know what's coming next. Looking after more than one baby is hard work: so many feeds and changes, so much washing, so little sleep. Many parents of multiples say that developing a routine helps them cope. As with sleep, it's important to develop a routine that suits the family, remembering that everyone is different and that every baby is different.

Some parents of multiples adopt a rigid routine and in particular parents of triplets have said that a routine helps. Others prefer to go with the flow. Don't be disheartened if it takes a while to see any sort of routine emerging.

Feeding and sleeping times can often determine how your days go. It may help to use an app or a chart or jot down the times when your babies are fed and go to sleep, to see if there's a pattern. Many parents say that it helps to feed their babies together, as this cuts down on the amount of time spent

feeding and helping to get the babies in sync.

Here are some views from parents of multiples:

**“ Routine worked for us. We started with a set bedtime at 7pm and stuck to it, settling them in a darkened room: they still go to bed at 7pm now and they are nearly two. It gives us the evening so we can have time as a couple. We always encouraged our babies to sleep at the same time after their feeds and although they have different amounts of sleep in the day, they at least have a rest and always go to bed together.”**

**“ I kept a diary in the early weeks and months of who was fed at what time, how much and for how long and when nappies were changed. It helped me remember what I needed to do and when, and if one baby cried I could look at my diary to see if there was a probable cause.”**

## TOP TIP

*Whether a routine works for you or not, try and include getting out and about into your day - this will benefit everyone.*

Your babies' brains will double in weight in the first year and lots of happy and positive experiences will help this growth.

Making time in the early weeks to sit and talk to your babies is important. When you are feeding or changing, making eye contact and talking to them will help their early development.

Your days might feel very busy and you might be pulled in all directions. Think about how you can build talking or singing to your babies into your daily routine, for example telling them about everything you are doing when you are preparing a meal, or tidying up.

You might feel silly at first, but your babies are 'born communicators' and listening to

you will help them learn to talk.

Listen to the signals that your babies give you and learn to respond to them. For example, if you listen and respond when they start to make sounds, you are having your first conversation.

Find out what's going on locally that you can join in with to give you more ideas about how you can support your babies' early development. For example, go along to the library, Children's Centre, local baby group or a Twins & Multiples Club if there's one nearby. You'll get ideas from watching other parents, and perhaps learn songs to sing to your babies while meeting other mums and dads.

## EACH OF MY BABIES IS UNIQUE

---

It is important for multiple children to develop their own personalities and be seen as individuals. You may want to think about dressing them differently to help your friends and family to think of them as individuals.

Having one-to-one time with each of your babies will help. Calling them by their

names, arranging separate outings, reading with each baby in turn and making the most of nappy-changing time are all good ways to have some one-to-one time.

One parent found that the babies' different personalities helped:

### TOP TIP

*Remember not to compare your babies with other babies or with each other. Multiples may take longer to reach milestones, and can develop at different rates, especially if they were premature.*

**“ Before they were born I agonised about how we would manage to treat them as individuals. But from the moment they arrived, their personalities were so different that I honestly haven't thought about it since. You couldn't treat my two as a unit if you tried.”**

## OTHER THINGS PARENTS OF TWINS, TRIPLETS AND MORE FOUND HELPFUL...

“ In the early weeks I used to sit my twins in their bouncy chairs facing each other so they could see each other.

Once they were a little older, they liked to sit in Bumbo seats either side of the play gym, playing with the toys dangling at just the right height in front of them, but they also really liked watching each other, interacting and appreciating one another's company from a few months old.”

“ The best way for me to entertain my three-month-old twins was to sing and do silly dances. Not only did it make them smile, but I burnt off a few calories!”

“ We found giving our triplets some time on their tummy when they were awake was good - it helped them develop head control. You had to stay with them though.”

“ We have made Saturdays our one-to-one day. In the mornings my partner takes one baby out for a while while I stay at home with the other one, and then we swap in the afternoons.”





# Illness... Injury... It doesn't have to change the picture.



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# COPING WITH CRYING

It's important to remember that all babies cry, but for many parents it can be really upsetting as you try to work out what your babies are trying to tell you. It's normal for newborns to cry and want to be cuddled and it's their way of communicating with you.

You can imagine how this can be doubled or trebled for multiples, and how testing it can be.

It's also fair to say that some babies cry more than others and parents of multiples have admitted to liking the quieter, 'easier' baby more than the one that cries more.

## WHAT CAN WE DO?

You will learn to respond to your babies' moods and how to tune in to them as you get to know each other. Try to stay calm; it will help your babies feel safe. Sometimes you won't have to say anything but you'll gradually be able to calm and settle your babies by using your face, voice, gently rocking, holding and touching.

Try to be consistent in how you respond when your babies cry. They will begin to notice and expect you to act and respond in a particular way.

It's clearly more difficult with more than one baby to do this all the time: if one of your babies is crying while you are changing or feeding their sibling, for example, or if they both/all cry at the same time. There's no easy answer but to stay calm, you'll know which of your babies to attend to and you can only do your best.

There is no doubt that excessive crying for no apparent reason is extremely frustrating, and spending some time thinking about how you will cope before your babies are born may help.

It may be that your baby or babies have colic (see page 74) or reflux (see page 75).

## Reasons your babies may be crying...



**Hungry**



**Nappy needs changing**



**Tired**



**Too hot or too cold**



**Needs to be winded**



**Over stimulated**



**Bored**



**Wants a cuddle**

## THIS IS HOW SOME OTHER PARENTS OF TWINS, TRIPLETS AND MORE **COPED WITH CRYING...**

“ My husband took the babies out a lot in a buggy so that I could have a break from the crying.”

“ One of my babies cried a lot - I breastfed him a lot and carried him in a baby carrier a lot of the time.”

“ It sometimes helped to settle them if I put on some background noise such as music.”

“ I needed to accept that babies cry, but they will be ok.

There were times when I needed to tend to one baby and the other would start to cry. At first, the sound was heartbreaking, then it grated on my nerves, but I took a breath and said 'my baby is fine, he is not in pain and I will tend to him shortly'.”

“ I found rocking chairs for the twins were helpful.

I learned to anticipate which one was more likely to cry a lot when she was hungry, so I fed her first, and rocked the other in the chair to comfort him if he cried while I finished feeding the first.”

If you have tried everything and it's not working, talk to your health visiting team or GP for more advice.





## Think about how to manage excessive crying...



- My babies seem to cry more in the afternoon. I'll change my routine so that I am ready to go for a walk with them in the afternoon or I'll try to arrange for someone to help at this time.
- I seem to get one settled and then the other one starts... but a nice warm bath helps them both to settle.
- My babies seem to respond to me singing or to being rocked, or if I put music on in the background.
- I can't get myself anything to eat or drink when they start crying. Making a packed lunch and putting a drink in a flask means I'm not going to starve and can grab it when I get a chance.
- I'm worried there is something wrong with them... I'm going to talk to one of the health visiting team.
- My babies seem to respond well to white noise... if I need a shower I find that putting them in their chairs outside the shower settles them and I feel better after a shower too.
- I've tried everything... I just have to accept the crying, get as much help as I can and know it will get better.
- I can't cope with another sleepless night because of the crying... I need to ask a relative to stay overnight to help.
- Anything else I can think of...

## HOW WILL MY OLDER CHILDREN ADJUST TO THE NEW BABIES?

Some children react very well to having new babies in the house. Others lapse into temper tantrums, aggression or baby-like behaviour such as thumb-sucking or asking to wear a nappy.

Here are a few ideas for involving and reassuring older siblings. See what works best for you:

- Make sure your older children know they are loved and cared for, even though the babies may be attracting lots of attention and keeping you extra busy. For example, include older children when you are out and people stop to admire the babies - perhaps they could answer the questions people often ask.
- Do your best to keep the babies away from older children's belongings.
- Try not to turn siblings' lives and routines upside down. Setting aside some time just for them, perhaps when the babies are asleep, may help.
- Some older children may want to help you care for the babies, or to playact with a doll or soft toy. Others prefer to keep baby things at a distance, so don't force the issue - they're all different.
- Children enjoy attention, but it doesn't necessarily have to be from you. Maybe think about letting nursery or school know about your new babies or ask a friend or grandparent to spend some time with your older children.
- Older children might feel particularly left out at feeding times, so try to make them

feel special. You could set aside some time to read to siblings before the feed is due, give them a snack to eat while you feed the babies or give them dolls so they can 'feed' their babies too. Perhaps you could have a box of toys that only come out at feeding time.

- Talk to them about when they were babies and if you can, show them pictures of themselves being fed by you.

Here are some suggestions from parents of multiples:

“ Our eldest was three when the twins were born, and he has been an excellent big brother to them. He is very protective (they are 'his babies') and he is the person who can make them laugh the most.

We made sure he came to visit them in special care the day after they were born, and he chose them a little toy each to go in their cots. Of course, they'd bought him two presents as well!

We also make sure we do things with just him - it could be going to the library, doing the



shopping and having a coffee in town or going out to the cinema.

The twins have had to fit in with him - getting him to toddler groups and pre-school and in turn he has to come to the twins groups with them!"

“ I involved my older child, who was 20 months, in everything. She would pass me nappies, wipes and clothes, and at feeding time I would sit her close to me. I didn't want her to feel excluded when she was so young herself.”

“ We did our best to spend individual time with our older son and read to him at night - he got to choose if he wanted mummy or daddy to read.

It got more difficult when the triplets started to move and could grab his toys and crawl over his games. We moved a lot of his 'older' toys to his bedroom so that he had his own space for uninterrupted play.”





## LOOKING AFTER MYSELF AND MY MENTAL HEALTH

Expressing how you feel and making sure you look after yourself are important. The early days can be tough for mothers, who are tired and recovering from the birth while trying to take everything in. This can affect the way you feel about your babies.

For partners, adapting to this new role can feel stressful as well as exciting, as you balance becoming a new parent with supporting your partner.

After the birth mothers might feel happy, tired, relieved or depressed. You might feel all of these emotions in one afternoon. Many new mothers have said that they had the 'baby blues' a few days after the birth but that the feelings passed. Talking to your partner, a close friend or family member about how you feel can help, as can taking all offers of support.

Don't forget how special you are and what you have achieved.

Making sure you are eating well, and getting a balanced diet, will help you cope. Follow the advice given in pregnancy about good things to eat.

Getting out and about with your babies in the buggy may feel like a huge effort but it's worth it.

### IS IT MORE THAN BABY BLUES?

If you have a history of any mental illness, or depression, or if you feel you may be experiencing postnatal depression (PND) talk to your midwife, GP or health visitor and they can make sure you get the help you need. Talking about how we feel isn't easy but the



### TOP TIP

*Try and schedule in some 'me' time once a week - even just 20 minutes to have a bath or read a magazine.*

earlier you ask for the help you need, the better. Partners can also experience PND.

One mum explains how difficult it was to begin with:



**It was all getting too much and I wish I had asked for help sooner.**

**I think I had postnatal depression but didn't tackle it and it affected our first six months."**

## Twins Trust has identified some of the causes of PND in parents of multiples:



- Caring for multiples is hard. You constantly have to split your time and attention and can't give each child the same level of care you would a single baby. This is perfectly natural and coping with two or more babies takes time to get used to, but you can do it!
- Multiple pregnancies are more prone to complications and multiple births more likely to be difficult. As a result the mother often feels low and exhausted from the start.
- Lack of sleep is likely to affect parents of multiples more than parents of singletons.
- Lack of support is a serious problem for multiple mothers, and caring for two or more babies on your own is physically and emotionally draining. So don't be afraid to ask for help. Some women take to being mothers easily - for others it is a longer process.
- Isolation can be a big problem for mums of multiples, who may not be able to get out of the house half as much as mothers of single babies.
- There is evidence to show that parents who spend time in neonatal care are more likely to suffer from PND and research by the charity, Bliss, shows that it can impact on parents' mental health in general.
- You may find that the reality of caring for your babies doesn't match up to your expectations of motherhood. If your babies are the result of IVF, for example, your family and friends might assume you're thrilled to have the babies you longed for and it might be hard to talk about anything you are struggling with.



## WHAT **SIGNS OF PND** SHOULD I LOOK OUT FOR SO I CAN RECOGNISE IT EARLY?

Twins Trust has produced a set of factsheets on PND (available from our website) but here are some of the things to look out for:

**Being overwhelmed by even the smallest tasks**

**Thinking you're a bad mother because you can't cope and blaming yourself**

**Feeling anxious or guilty**

**Feeling tense and irritable**

**Crying a lot**

**Difficulty sleeping**

**Poor concentration**

**Anxiety or panic attacks**

**An inability to make decisions**

## HOW CAN OTHERS HELP ME?

Whatever your situation, try not to think you have to cope on your own.

If you are lucky enough to live near friends and family, there'll be lots of things they can do to share the load. We have mentioned some in Section 2, like helping with meals, shopping, washing and looking after older children.

If you don't have help nearby, ask your health visiting team about Home-Start (groups of trained volunteers who can help families under pressure).

Having multiple babies often means that partners are instantly more involved in their care, as having more than one baby launches them into their new role.

Here are some views from other parents of multiples:



**My partner couldn't have been more hands-on. Bath time in particular was hectic with three children under three to**



get washed, and the twins still needing to be breastfed.

We bathed them all together. Then we were like a well-oiled machine: I dried, dressed and fed twin number one while he did the same with number two, then while I fed number two, he dried and dressed our older daughter and read her a bedtime story, then he folded the washing while I gave her a cuddle and talked about our favourite bits of the day.

The tea was poured when I finally got downstairs!"

“ My husband said he is really lucky we had twins so that he could be as hands-on as I was, as there was always one baby to feed, play with, change etc.

He was lucky enough to work half days while they were in the neonatal unit for three weeks, and saved his paternity leave for when they came home, so he didn't miss much.”

## HOW TO DEAL WITH A RELATIONSHIP UNDER STRESS

Most of the time all will be well in your relationship, and you will be able to celebrate your special new family. However, having multiples can put a strain on your relationship.

There are people who can help and guide you through some of these issues, so don't keep your difficulties to yourself. Have a look at the list of agencies and websites at the end of this booklet and remember you can always speak to your midwife, health visitor, family nurse practitioner or GP.

Perhaps most importantly, try to talk to each other or someone close to you that you trust.

Relationships can be under a huge amount of pressure for many reasons and you might have already had difficulties before you found out you were having more than one baby.

Some parents have shared their experiences overleaf of dealing with relationships while looking after young multiples:

**“ Having our triplets brought us closer in some ways and further apart in others.**

**I think it adds an extra bond with your partner as you are the only two people going through the experience, but you naturally get very little time alone and all conversations are about the children.**

**It is a massive period of adjustment in all aspects of life.”**

Sometimes there are more serious relationship problems. If your partner is abusive or violent, you need to get help and seek confidential advice from organisations like Women's Aid or by asking your midwife, health visitor or GP.

**“ By the time my twins were three months old, I'd not had room to breathe. My hormones were everywhere, I was sleep-deprived and our lives had been turned upside down overnight. My husband and I had stopped communicating.**

**We went to a wedding and my parents had the babies overnight - the first time I'd left them that long. It gave us the opportunity to be ourselves again and especially to talk about how we felt about our new family.**

**I would recommend leaving your babies with a trusted person and having some time on your own if things are tough, even if it's only for an hour.”**





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# SECTION FIVE:

## KEEPING MY BABIES SAFE



*This section brings together some specific ideas and top tips that parents have found useful in helping to keep their babies safe. It's difficult to include everything, so think what else you might need in your own home and what you feel will work best for you.*

### AROUND THE HOME

- "It's hard to be everywhere at once so... we spent time before our babies came home removing as many potential dangers as possible and kept checking as they got older."
- "We found a playpen/travel cot helpful for when we wanted to make a drink or pop upstairs. We got them used to it early."
- "Bouncy chairs, that your babies can be strapped into, are a must. You can put them somewhere safe when you need to pop to the loo, answer the door and so on. When we were loading up the car, we could take the babies out one at a time. We always put the chairs on the floor - never on an raised surface."
- "When our babies became mobile we got safety gates for strategic doorways."
- "I made a point of keeping plastic nappy bags well out of reach. My girls together would unravel them in seconds, even from a very young age, when I was changing their nappies." (NB nappy bags can be a suffocation risk)
- "I bathed my babies separately until they could sit up unaided. I had one baby on a changing mat beside me whilst I bathed the other baby."
- "I kept a supply of nappies and clean clothes downstairs so I didn't have to keep taking the babies up and down the stairs."
- "I found that some baby toys were just not suitable with twins. My two boys were very physically active from early on and would roll over and accidentally bash each other with toys, or pull them on top of each other."

## OUT AND ABOUT

- “We had car seats fitted and ready for when we brought our babies home from hospital.”
- “When I went to the supermarket I would ask someone to get me a trolley with double seats.”
- “I used to get quite stressed at baby and

toddler groups when there were older children running around. I felt more secure when the babies were in bouncy chairs. Most groups have these, you just need to ask.”

- “The buggy was great for taking the babies to the car. I knew they were safe as I strapped each one in to their car seat.”

## IMMUNISATION

### One of the main ways you can keep your babies safe is to have them immunised.

All babies and children are offered a programme of routine immunisations to protect them from infection.

Appointments are usually organised by your GP practice and they'll invite you when the immunisations are due.

Often twins or triplets are born prematurely but will be invited to attend the first appointment two months after their birth irrespective of how early they were born. They can be vulnerable to infection and need to be protected as early as possible. They may be offered extra immunisations if they were born particularly early or were low birth weight, or if you are planning to travel abroad, but the hospital consultant or your GP will be able to advise you.

Your midwife or health visitor will be able to give you more information and leaflets on what immunisations are available and when your babies will have them. The NHS website also has a vaccination schedule.

It can be complicated to take more than one baby to be immunised at the same time, and

there are many ways that you can make this easier for yourself.

### TOP TIP

*Go with another adult if you can, to avoid feeling flustered. Try and keep calm - people will understand.*

Other parents of multiples have shared how they managed this:

“ I always got my twins' jabs done a week apart in case they had a reaction or they both screamed the nurses' room down.

I could then give them the cuddles they needed instead of feeling torn between them.”

“ I had to go on my own a couple of times for their immunisations and my advice, though it's hard, is not to make too much fuss.

I kept them both in the pram and brought them out one at a time. After their injections I gave them a quick cuddle and put them back in the pram. When I left we went for a walk in the fresh air, which seemed to settle them quickly.”

“ The practice nurse agreed to do our immunisation appointments at a different time from the baby clinic so my husband could come and help.

I booked double appointments so we weren't rushed and took the boys in clothes that could be pulled up so we didn't have to undress them.”

## OTHER IMPORTANT SAFETY ADVICE

If you are using a sling, follow the **TICKS** advice to reduce the risk of suffocation. Keep your babies...

- T** Tight
- I** In view
- C** Close enough to kiss
- K** Keep their chins off their chests
- S** Supported backs

**Before long your babies will be able to roll over.** To reduce the risk of babies falling from beds or changing tables, change your babies' nappies on the floor and never leave them unattended on a bed, sofa or changing table.

**When carrying your baby up and down stairs** use the handrail, watch where you are putting your feet and never carry more than one baby at a time.

**After warming a bottle of formula**, shake the bottle well and test the temperature before feeding by placing a few drops on the inside of your wrist. It should feel lukewarm, not hot.

**Keep button batteries well away** from babies and small children as they can cause severe internal burns if swallowed.

**If you have a pet**, try to start preparing the animal before the babies arrive. Organisations such as PDSA have excellent tips ([www.pdsa.org.uk](http://www.pdsa.org.uk)).

**Avoid using a microwave** to heat up bottles of formula. Use a bottle warmer or a jug of hot water to place the bottle in.

**At bathtime**, run cold water into the bath first, then add some hot. Check the water with your elbow or a baby thermometer.

## TOP TIP

*Try to attend a baby First Aid course before your babies arrive. You can do this online and via apps as well as in person.*



## SECTION SIX:

### ARE MY BABIES WELL?

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*This final section includes advice on what you can do to keep your babies well along with tips on how to cope when they are poorly. We've included basic information about some common ailments.*

There will be times when you will be worried that your babies aren't well and wonder what you can do. You may notice differences in their cry or their routine. You will know your babies better than anybody and trusting your gut feelings is simple but good advice.

Most childhood illnesses pass after a few days and your babies will be fine but knowing what to do and who to ask if you are worried makes you feel better.

Try not to worry too much about some of the minor illnesses that your babies may get - all babies get snuffles, colds and tummy aches. Often just making sure they have plenty of fluids and don't get too hot will be enough, but if you are not sure, get advice from NHS direct, your GP or health visitor.

It's a challenge when illness strikes one or all of multiple babies and it's difficult to know how best to divide your attention. It can also be that as soon as one baby gets better, the next baby comes down with the same illness and you find yourself in a spiral of sickness.

Some of the ways you can help to prevent your babies getting ill...

- My friend has a cold, I'll ask her to put off visiting until she is well.
- I'll gently remind friends and family to wash their hands before they pick up my babies.
- I won't let anyone smoke near or around my babies.
- I'll continue breastfeeding.
- I'll have my babies immunised as it helps to keep them safe.
- Other ways I can think of...

## TOP TIP

*Make yourself a sandwich and a flask of hot drink, or better still, get someone else to. At least you'll have something to eat and drink if you're on your own with poorly or crying babies.*

Other parents of multiples have shared their experiences of when their babies were ill:

“Whenever our triplets have been ill together (or in quick succession) it's been tough.

We try to focus on the essentials: food, sleep (when you can) and trying to keep whoever is unwell as comfy as possible.

We always try to have our freezer stocked with some good basics and plenty of baby medicines in stock.

We don't have family close but we do call on friends at times of real need and they have always been amazing.

We then try to repay them when things are back to normal, for example, have them for a meal, or their children for playtime.”

“My twins are just getting over gastroenteritis.

My tips would be to let the routine go to pot, which is hard because routine is how you survive and stay on top of things. Try hard to stay calm. When they are ill I let all my usual rules go out of the window. I put the telly on and just cuddle them both. The novelty of having me there and actually sitting still, seems to surprise them into perking up for a bit if nothing else!”

“When my little boy had to be admitted into hospital at 14 weeks old the staff were brilliant about letting his sister stay as I was breastfeeding.”

Think about ways to cope if your babies are ill... ●●●



## TAKING MY BABIES TO SEE THE DOCTOR

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Getting out of the house with multiples is a challenge at any time, but even more so when one or more of your babies is poorly.

Most health care professionals will understand this and will try and see infants at the start of surgery or make other arrangements. You can request a home visit if you feel that's what's needed.

It's useful to remember that if you are worried about your babies, you can ring the surgery and ask to speak to your GP. They will usually ring you back at the end of their appointments. Don't be put off by anyone - trust your gut instincts!

As one parent of multiples explained:

**“ I try to get a doctor's advice over the phone if I don't think something is serious but I want confirmation or a suggested approach. My GP is usually pretty good about this, as getting in to surgery is hard work with three.”**

## COMMON ILLNESSES AND CONDITIONS

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We have included some brief information about some of the common illnesses your babies might get. You'll find more advice and information on childhood illnesses at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk).

### HIGH TEMPERATURE

A high temperature is above 37.5° Celcius (99.5° Fahrenheit). Your baby's face may look flushed and feel hot. They may be a bit whingey and clingy.

Offer plenty of fluids and take off outer clothes so they are just in a nappy and vest, perhaps covered loosely with a cotton sheet.

You may also want to consider giving the recommended dose of paracetamol or ibuprofen, but if your babies are younger than three months you should get medical

advice first. If your baby's temperature doesn't seem to be improving, or if you are worried, you should contact your GP or NHS 111 for advice.

It may be that they have a cold or are teething or they might be about to come down with something else. Keep a close eye on them, trust your instinct and seek medical advice if you are worried.

### COLIC

No one knows what causes colic, and coping with multiples who have colic can be tough. All babies cry but if your baby cries for more than three hours a day, three days a week for at least a week it may be colic. Colic usually starts within the first few weeks of life but often stops by the time babies are six

months old. Babies with colic sometimes cry more in the afternoons and evenings.

If you think your baby/babies have colic, speak to your health visitor or GP. You can find more information about colic at: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/colic](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/colic). There are also suggestions about coping with crying in Section 4 of this booklet.

A parent of multiples talks about colic:

**“ Both my twins had colic. The screaming was terrible.**

**Because our first son also had colic, we knew they would grow out of it. For him it lasted till around 12 weeks, so for the first 12 weeks we made sure there were always two pairs of hands around at tea time, and it was lots of cuddles and walking about for two hours.**

**I always advise parents with a colicky baby not to get stressed - it will stop.”**

## TOP TIP

*If it all gets too much, put your babies somewhere safe and step away for a few minutes to calm yourself. It will get better, honestly.*

## CONSTIPATION

If you notice that your babies have difficulty pooing, they may be constipated. This can be uncomfortable and you may notice they are less interested in feeding and are a bit 'off'.

With multiples it's hard to keep track of when each of your babies last had a poo, so some parents of multiples find it helpful to make a note of when each baby feeds and poos.

Often increasing your baby's fluids is enough but advice changes. Some parents say that baby massage helps too.

If you are worried, it's best to ask your midwife or health visitor and see your GP.

## REFLUX

Sometimes after your babies feed or after winding them you might notice small amounts of milk come back. This is common and is often called possetting or reflux.

Reflux usually starts before a baby is eight weeks old and gets better by the time they are a year old. For some babies reflux can cause discomfort and crying.

For more information on reflux, including symptoms and how you can try to ease it, see: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/reflux-in-babies](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/reflux-in-babies). You can also speak to your health visitor or GP.

If either or both babies are violently sick and/or have diarrhoea it is best to have them checked over by a doctor.

One parent of multiples shares her experience of reflux in one of her twins overleaf.

“My girls were premature and one of them had reflux quite badly for the first five months. The screaming from her at one point was relentless.

One time when my husband was at work and the screaming had gone on for about an hour, I had to stand in the garden for five minutes before I could go and try again to soothe her.

It does eventually get better, just try and keep sane any way you can.”

## RASHES & MENINGITIS

Babies' skin can be very sensitive and a rash can be a response to new chemicals or detergents such as a change of soap powder or the environment. You may notice occasional spots that your midwife, health visitor or GP will be able to reassure you about.

On other occasions a rash can be a sign that one or both of your babies isn't well. Parents understandably worry about bacterial meningococcal disease and meningitis but the rash is one of the later symptoms and is not always present.

It is good to have the information and then you'll know when you need to act quickly and get medical help. See list of possible meningitis symptoms in the green box.

Your health visitor will be able to give you an information leaflet, and more information is available at: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/meningitis/symptoms](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/meningitis/symptoms).

In babies and young children, possible symptoms of bacterial **meningitis** include:

- Becoming floppy and unresponsive, or stiff with jerky movements
- Becoming irritable and not wanting to be held
- Unusual crying
- Vomiting and refusing feeds
- Pale and blotchy skin
- Loss of appetite
- Staring expression
- A high temperature
- Very sleepy with a reluctance to wake up
- A dislike of bright lights
- Some babies will develop a swelling in the soft part of their head (fontanelle)

If you think it's likely that your baby has meningitis you should seek **urgent** medical attention.

## MORE THAN A COLD - COULD IT BE BRONCHIOLITIS?

Bronchiolitis is a common condition affecting babies and young children, caused by inflammation of the small airways in the lungs which makes it more difficult for your babies to breathe. In most cases it is not a severe

illness, but a small percentage of babies are admitted to hospital every year.

Your babies are at greater risk of developing severe bronchiolitis if they were born prematurely (before 37 weeks). Babies born prematurely have less mature immune systems

and their lungs and airways are not fully developed, making them more susceptible.

For more information on bronchiolitis, including symptoms and ways to reduce the risk, please visit: [www.morethanacold.co.uk](http://www.morethanacold.co.uk).

## WHEN TO CALL AN AMBULANCE OR TAKE MY BABY TO A&E

You know your babies best - if you are concerned, always seek help. It is very difficult to say precisely when to call an ambulance or go to the accident and emergency department (A&E), but you may find the list in the orange box is a useful guide.

### NHS 6-8 week baby check

Your baby should be offered a health check when they are six to eight weeks old. This is to check their physical health and responses.

Mums should also be offered a postnatal check around this time but this is not always routinely offered by GPs.

You can request an appointment for a check, especially if you have any concerns.

Visit [www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/baby-reviews](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/baby-reviews).

### Call 999 for an ambulance or **get to A&E** if your child...

- Stops breathing
- Won't wake up
- Has a spotty, purple-red rash anywhere on the body that doesn't fade when you press a glass against it - this could be a sign of blood poisoning (septicaemia)
- Has a fit for the first time, even if they seem to recover
- Has a severe allergic reaction (for details visit [www.nhs.uk/conditions/anaphylaxis](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/anaphylaxis))
- If you're **very** worried about them
- If you think someone may have seriously injured your baby

Again, trust your instincts. You know what's unusual or worrying behaviour in your child.

# FURTHER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

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## TWINS TRUST RESOURCES

[www.twinstrust.org](http://www.twinstrust.org)

### BOOKLETS

- Healthy Multiple Pregnancy Guide
- Neonatal Care
- Breastfeeding More Than One
- Complications in Your Pregnancy with Twins, Triplets or More

### FACTSHEETS

- Triplets
- Grandparents
- One parent families
- Safer sleeping
- Partners
- Same sex parents
- Postnatal depression
- Sleep expectations

Please note that some booklets and factsheets are for members only.

### TELEPHONE SUPPORT

**Twinline:** 0800 138 0509 (freephone)  
Open Mondays to Fridays 10am to 1pm and 7pm to 10pm. You can also email questions to [asktwinline@twinstrust.org](mailto:asktwinline@twinstrust.org).

### BREASTFEEDING PEER SUPPORTERS

For more information please email [breastfeedingsupport@twinstrust.org](mailto:breastfeedingsupport@twinstrust.org).

### FACEBOOK GROUPS

- Triplet parents
- Special Needs
- One Parent
- Grandparents

To join any of the Facebook groups above please email [support-team@twinstrust.org](mailto:support-team@twinstrust.org).

### BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP (BSG)

Twins Trust's BSG supports families and carers of twins, triplets and more who have experienced loss during pregnancy, at birth or any time after.

- [www.twinstrust.org/bereavement](http://www.twinstrust.org/bereavement)
- [bereavementsupport@twinstrust.org](mailto:bereavementsupport@twinstrust.org)

### COMMUNITY FORUM

The community forum has been designed to offer a supportive environment for parents or carers of twins, triplets or more to connect and talk to each other.

- [www.twinstrust.org/forum](http://www.twinstrust.org/forum)

### FAMILY CRISIS SUPPORT

Through our Family Crisis Support service we offer short term practical support to families with twins, triplets and more in times of severe need or crisis.

- [www.twinstrust.org/family-crisis-support](http://www.twinstrust.org/family-crisis-support)

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# INFORMATION & SUPPORT FROM OTHER ORGANISATIONS

## ONE PARENT FAMILIES

### Gingerbread

- ▶ Helpline: 0808 802 0925
- ▶ [www.gingerbread.org.uk](http://www.gingerbread.org.uk)

## RELATIONSHIPS

### The Couple Connection

A website developed to help couples to cope with changes and to strengthen their relationships

- ▶ [www.thecoupleconnection.net](http://www.thecoupleconnection.net)

### Relate

The UK's largest provider of relationship support.

- ▶ [www.relate.org.uk](http://www.relate.org.uk)

## FINANCES

### Benefits & Tax Credits

Information about Tax Credits, Child Benefit and other benefits you may be entitled to

- ▶ [www.gov.uk/browse/benefits](http://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits)

### Citizens Advice

- ▶ [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

### Working Families

Campaigning charity supporting and giving voice to working parents and carers

- ▶ [www.workingfamilies.org.uk](http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk)

### Turn To Us

A charity that helps people access the money available to them - website includes a benefits calculator

- ▶ [www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk)

### Maternity Action

Information on maternity rights and benefits

- ▶ [www.maternityaction.org.uk](http://www.maternityaction.org.uk)

## SUPPORT AT HOME

### Home-Start UK

Volunteer support and practical help for families with children under the age of 5 - families can self-refer

- ▶ [info@home-start.org.uk](mailto:info@home-start.org.uk)
- ▶ [www.home-start.org.uk](http://www.home-start.org.uk)

## PREMATURE AND SICK BABIES

### Bliss

- ▶ 0808 801 0322
- ▶ [hello@bliss.org.uk](mailto:hello@bliss.org.uk)
- ▶ [www.bliss.org.uk](http://www.bliss.org.uk)

## BREASTFEEDING

### NCT - National Childbirth Trust

Helpline operates daily 8am to midnight

- ▶ 0300 330 0700
- ▶ [www.nct.org.uk](http://www.nct.org.uk)

### National Breastfeeding Helpline

Operates daily 9.30am to 9.30pm

- ▶ 0300 100 0212

## BOTTLE FEEDING

### Unicef UK

Website includes a guide to making up feeds and responsive bottle feeding

- ▶ [www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/baby-friendly-resources/bottle-feeding-resources](http://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/baby-friendly-resources/bottle-feeding-resources)

## COPING WITH CRYING, SLEEPLESS AND DEMANDING BABIES

### Cry-sis

Helpline operates daily 9am to 10pm

- ▶ 0845 122 8669
- ▶ [www.cry-sis.org.uk](http://www.cry-sis.org.uk)



## SAFER SLEEPING

### The Lullaby Trust

- ▶ 0808 802 6869
- ▶ [www.lullabytrust.org.uk](http://www.lullabytrust.org.uk)

## SUPPORT FOR PARENTS

### Family Lives

Helpline operates 9am to 9pm Mondays to Fridays and 10am to 3pm Saturdays and Sundays

- ▶ 0808 800 2222
- ▶ [www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk)

## POSTNATAL DEPRESSION

### Association for Post-Natal Illness (APNI)

Helpline operates 10am to 2pm Mondays to Fridays

- ▶ 020 7386 0868
- ▶ [info@apni.org](mailto:info@apni.org)
- ▶ [www.apni.org](http://www.apni.org)

## DOMESTIC ABUSE

### 24-hour National Domestic Violence Freephone Helpline

Operated by Women's Aid and Refuge

- ▶ 0808 2000 247
- ▶ [www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk)

## CHILD SAFETY

### Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT)

- ▶ 020 7608 3828
- ▶ [www.capt.org.uk](http://www.capt.org.uk)

### Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)

- ▶ [www.rospa.com](http://www.rospa.com)
- ▶ 0121 248 2000
- ▶ [help@rospa.com](mailto:help@rospa.com)

### Car Seats

For information on car seats and the law

- ▶ [www.gov.uk/child-car-seats-the-rules](http://www.gov.uk/child-car-seats-the-rules)

## ILLNESSES

### Bronchiolitis Information

- ▶ [www.morethanacold.co.uk](http://www.morethanacold.co.uk)

## NHS RESOURCES

### Healthy Start

- ▶ [www.healthystart.nhs.uk](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk)

### Pregnancy and Baby Guide

Includes week-to-week guide, video clips and information on feeding

- ▶ [www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby)

### Conditions and Illnesses

Including reflux, colic, bronchiolitis, meningitis and immunisations

- ▶ [www.nhs.uk/conditions](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## COURSES

We have courses designed specifically for parents of multiples...

- Antenatal
- Breastfeeding
- Practical Preparing for Parenthood
- Webinars

For more information about courses email [support-team@twinstrust.org](mailto:support-team@twinstrust.org) or call **0800 1380509**

[www.twinstrust.org/courses](http://www.twinstrust.org/courses)



## SUPPORT US AND WE'LL SUPPORT YOU WITH...

### RESOURCES

A wealth of information to help you wherever you are on your parenting journey

### DISCOUNTS

at high street retailers such as **JoJo Maman Bébé** and **Clarks**, cinema trips, holidays and **much more**

### MAGAZINE

packed full of interesting stories, advice and ideas



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**1** Join by Direct Debit for only £2.80 per month - that's less than £34 per year!

**2** Or join for a year by making a one-off payment of £40.

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Postcode:

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When are you due?

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Title:

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Date:

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Please fill in the whole form and send it to: **Twins Trust, Manor House, Church Hill, Aldershot, Hants, GU12 4JU**

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9 4 8 2 7 1

To: The Manager

Bank/Building Society

Address

Postcode

Name(s) of Account Holder(s)

Bank/Building Society Account Number

Branch Sort Code

Reference

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Signature(s)

Date

Banks and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debit Instructions for some types of account.  
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**2**

## Pay by Credit/Debit card

Please debit my MASTERCARD/VISA/MAESTRO

Card No.

Valid from  Expiry date

Issue No.  (some cards only)

Security code (3 digit code on the reverse of your card):

Signature:

Date:

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In times of change, our focus remains the same. If you need legal advice and support, we're here, just like we've always been.

**So you're able to focus on what really matters.**

# PREPARING FOR PARENTHOOD

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