

Taking Care of Twins

An exciting time

Having twins can be one of the most exciting times of your life. It can also be one of the most demanding. While twins will bring you special joys, caring for twins is a big job. Sometimes just getting through the day can seem impossible.

Fortunately, many other parents have been through the same thing. They can tell you ways to make things easier. Here are some ideas about how to make life with twins more of a joy and less of a burden.

Planning ahead

The first few months after the babies arrive can be a blur of diapers and feedings. Take the chance during pregnancy to look for help in those first months. Accept any help that is offered. Even though this may be hard for you to do, it can make a big difference. Talk with your partner about how the duties of caring for the babies can be shared. Having both parents involved in child care is good for your children as well as for you.

Start childbirth classes early. Many twins are born prematurely. If you don't start classes early, you may not finish before the twins are born. Make all your other arrangements early too, so you're ready.

What should we do?

- Contact your local Mothers of Twins Club (see page 3). Talking with others who have had twins is invaluable. You can get many helpful ideas from the parents in this group about how to get through those early years.
- Read some of the books written about caring for twins. These books can give you helpful ideas and tell you what to expect. You may want to subscribe to a magazine for parents of twins.
- Consider breast feeding. Breast milk is the best way to feed a baby even when there are two. Many women breast-feed twins. Get some advice from those who have done it from the Mothers of Twins Club or La Leche League (a support group for mothers who breast feed). It might be easier than you think.
- Expect to be tired. It will be a long time before you get a full night's sleep, so take every chance to rest during the day.

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- Expect to have some negative feelings from time to time. With the intensity of the experience of having twins, it is natural to have these feelings. Try not to feel guilty about having them. Most parents of twins have moments when they feel they aren't up to the job of caring for the twins. These feelings won't last.
 - Give each twin time alone with you. They need to know they are important as individuals and not just as twins.
 - Make a special effort to speak and read frequently to each child. This may help with the delay in language development that some twins have.

What shouldn't we do?

- Don't pick names for the twins that sound alike. One of the most difficult jobs for all children is to learn who they are as people and how they are different from others around them. This job is harder for twins, especially identical ones, who are always being compared with one another.
- Don't dress them alike, for the same reason.
- Don't call them "the twins." Use their names just as you would two children of different ages. It helps them learn who they are.
- Don't make comparisons between the twins and don't create competition between them. It is natural for all siblings to compare themselves and be competitive with each other. Being a twin and being constantly compared with your twin can make these feelings worse. You may want to think about putting them in different classrooms at school.
- Don't forget the other children in the family. The amount of time that it takes to care for twins can make an older brother or sister feel forgotten. Make a special effort to set aside time regularly to be alone with the other children.
- Don't forget about yourself or your partner. Talk to each other about your feelings and problems. Try to find some way to take a break regularly. You need it and you deserve it!

Resources for families with twins



Mothers of Twins Clubs

Contacts for local chapters can be obtained by writing to the following address or by looking in the telephone book

National Organization of Mothers of Twins Clubs
Executive Office
P.O. Box 23188
Albuquerque, NM 87192-1188
Telephone: 505-275-0955

TWINS Magazine

Contains articles about care of twins and ads for twin care equipment
P.O. Box 12045
Overland Park, KS 66282
Telephone: 800-821-5533

Twin Services

Source of informational booklets on twin care
P.O. Box 10066
Berkeley, CA 94709
Telephone: 510-524-0863

Books

The Joy of Twins: Having, Raising, and Loving Babies Who Arrive in Groups. By P.P. Novotny. New York: Crown, 1988.

Having Twins: A Parent's Guide to Pregnancy, Birth and Early Childhood. By E. Noble. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1980.

Twins: From Conception to Five Years. By A. Clegg and A. Woolett. New York: Ballantine, 1983.

This handout provides a general overview on this topic and may not apply to everyone. To find out if this handout applies to you and to get more information on this subject, talk to your family doctor.



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