

Tips for Breastfeeding Twins

It can be a shock to learn that you are pregnant with twins. Suddenly many of your expectations, plans, and birth or parenting decisions must change. Your decision to breastfeed, however, does not have to change. Human milk is especially important for twins, who are often small at birth and need all the health advantages human milk provides. And breastfeeding can help you create that special and necessary bond with both babies. Many mothers have nursed their twins with wonderful results. You can enjoy nurturing your babies in this special way, too!

Getting Started

Nursing early and often is the best way to get a good start breastfeeding. However, if you or your babies have a health problem that necessitates separation, you don't have to give up the idea of breastfeeding. Pumping your breasts early and often is then the best way to get a good start.

If you must pump your milk because one or both babies cannot yet nurse, use a rented hospital-grade electric breast pump to express milk from both breasts at once. Pump at least eight times in 24 hours, which is every two to three hours during the day, and at least once during the night.

Milk production is regulated by milk removal during sucking (or pumping) from the breasts. Frequent and thorough milk removal increases milk production. That's why most mothers of twins can produce enough milk for both babies.

Coordinating Feedings

Once your twins are healthy and home from the hospital, and at least one can be



Combination cradle and clutch position: The first baby is positioned in the cradle hold with his head resting on your forearm. The second baby has his head in the first baby's lap and his feet are under your arm.

Mixed Feelings

Before, during, and after the birth, some mothers have mixed emotions about their "double blessings." Unfortunately, mothers of twins may feel isolated from others because of pregnancy bed rest or difficulty coordinating outings with two babies. Also, they may find their negative feelings are not understood when shared with those

around them. These feelings are a normal reaction to a stressful situation and should not be ignored or discounted. It often helps to talk to another mother of twins.

counted on to breastfeed well, most mothers find it easiest to breastfeed both at once, which is called simultaneous feeding. Use pillows you have available or a larger nursing pillow to support the babies so your hands are free to help each one latch on correctly.

When both babies breastfeed well, most mothers switch babies from one breast to the other every 24 hours. For example, Baby A takes the left breast today and Baby B takes the right breast. Tomorrow, Baby B takes the left breast and Baby A takes the right breast. Alternate babies and breasts each feeding if any baby is not yet able to breastfeed well.

In regards to night nursing, it may be easier if you learn to breastfeed both babies when lying down. See the section for information on positioning, on the reverse side.

Mothering the Mother

A mother of twins needs to take good care of herself by eating well-balanced meals and drinking to thirst. Get as much rest as possible by sleeping or resting when the babies sleep. Accept all offers of help with meals, laundry and older siblings.

Enjoy this special time when you can nourish and nurture two little human beings at once!



Double-clutch or double side position: Each baby is lying with his head in mother's lap and his legs under her arm. Support a baby's neck and shoulders in each of your hands or place their heads and upper bodies on firm pillows. If there is a surface directly behind you (chair back, sofa, wall, etc.) babies' legs and feet should be bent upward and pressed against it, not pushing against it.



Finding Support

Make friends and family members aware of the practical and helpful ways they can be involved. Ask them to read the information on this sheet so they can help and encourage you during this incredible time in your life!

La Leche League Leaders are accredited volunteers who are available to help with breastfeeding questions in person, over the phone, and online. They are also excellent sources of support. Locate an LLL Leader near you @ www.llli.org.

Resources: Kerkhoff Gromada, K. *Mothering Multiples: Breastfeeding and Caring for Twins or More*. Schaumburg, IL: LLLI, 2007.

www.karengromada.com: Author Karen Kerkhoff Gromada's Web site, which is dedicated to providing helpful information and images for mothers of multiple babies.



Double cradle position: Each baby is lying on his side with his body facing you and his legs stretched out across your upper abdomen. Their heads should be resting on your forearm or near the crooks of your elbows. Their backs should be supported by your forearms, and you can hold their bottoms with your hand. Each baby's ear, shoulder, and hips should be in a straight line. Each baby's head should be straight in line with his body, not arched back or turned sideways. Babies' legs cross in front.



Double prone position: Lean back in a recliner or on pillows until you feel well supported in a semi-sitting or a supine (flat on your back) position. Lay the babies on their abdomens so they face your breasts. Their abdomens and legs are lying parallel along, and facing, your abdomen but with their heads turned slightly toward the middle of your chest, so each keeps her nose (airway) clear for breathing.

For Spouses, Friends, and Relatives

Mothers of twins need help to survive the first year. This may sound dramatic, but it is true. The biggest issues for mothers of twins are getting enough sleep, keeping up with minimal housework, finding outlets for negative feelings, and avoiding isolation. The help and support of friends, relatives, and spouses may mean the difference between "making it" or "falling apart" for a new mother of twins. Often people want to help, but they don't know what to do. And the wrong kind of help may actually make things worse. Here is a short list of tips for anyone who wants to help a mother of twins.

- Bring food when you visit.
- Change the babies' diapers.
- Offer the mom a back rub/foot massage while she nurses.
- Bring the mother water or juice.
- Watch the babies while mom sleeps.
- If a baby needs to nurse in the middle of the night, change him and then bring him to the mother while she is in bed. When the next baby wakes up, switch them.
- Watch the babies while mom takes a 15-minute break.
- Listen to the mother if she is scared, tired, or overwhelmed, and hold her if she needs to cry. Tell her you love her.
- Do household tasks and shopping.
- Prepare and serve lunch or dinner.
- Bring current magazines or movies.
- Help the mother find another mother of twins to talk to.
- Tell the mother what a good job she's doing with her babies.
- When you visit, help the mother feel relaxed; don't expect to be entertained.
- She needs support and encouragement; don't give advice when she complains or seems tired.
- Do not undermine the mother's confidence by asking negative questions, such as, "Are you sure those babies are getting enough to eat?" or "Why aren't they sleeping through the night yet?"
- Concentrate on "mothering the mother"; help with household chores rather than taking over the babies' care.
- Don't disappear after three months! A mother of twins needs extra help for at least the first year.