

Your Multiples and You

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Welcome to the Wonderful World of Parenting Multiples

Caring for two or more babies at once can be challenging and sometimes overwhelming. We want to offer encouragement, advice and practical knowledge to help you on the path to successful parenting. Parenting multiples is an exciting adventure! No matter where you are along this journey, you'll need support from others. Support from a partner, extended family, and other caring adults is key. Don't hesitate to ask for help when you need it. Recognize that taking care of yourself is just as important as caring for your children.

Connect with another parent of multiples

Whether you're still expecting or already caring for your multiples, seek out another parent of multiples for support. That person can offer you personal support and answer specific questions. You'll have lots of questions! Your health care provider may be able to refer you to other parents of multiples for networking and mutual support.

Connect with your local parents of multiples club

Local clubs are full of members who have multiples and understand your situation best. Join a local club as soon as possible, if available in your area. Clubs generally meet monthly as a means of support and education for members. Attend meetings whenever you can, ask questions and make connections! Most local and state clubs have an online presence that offers you support from your home. Social media allows you to seek advice and connect with others from your local club in between chances to meet in person.

Find out if your local club offers a clothing and equipment sale. If so, it's a valuable benefit to your local club membership. Each local club is different, but many clubs offer play dates, family outings, loan libraries, premie closets, mentoring programs, holiday events, and more. If your needs are more specific, the club can help you connect with parents facing challenges similar to yours.

If there isn't a club in your area, Multiples of America offers an Individual Affiliate membership, or you can organize your own group. Multiples of America offers the booklet *How to Organize a Parents of Multiples Club* to guide you in that process.



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COUNTDOWN TO PARENTING MULTIPLES

5...Get as much rest as you can to prevent premature labor. Expect that you may have to stop work earlier and give up traveling and other recreational activities.

4...Get good obstetrical care, and follow your doctor's advice. Be aware of the importance of folic acid in your diet. Be aware that multiple birth pregnancies have a tendency for premature delivery and other complications.

3...Prepare your household and your older children for the coming event. Make other children an active, helpful part of the new experience.

2...Plan to have help after the babies are born, especially if you already have small children at home.

1...Contact your local parents of multiples club for support and information on raising multiples. Another great resource is Multiples of America's website at www.multiplesofamerica.org.



FACTS ABOUT TWINNING

There are two types of twins:

- Monozygotic (MZ) commonly referred to as identical twins
- Dizygotic (DZ) commonly referred to as fraternal twins
- Identical twins result when a single fertilized egg splits after conception. These twins are generally alike.
- Identical twinning has a constant occurrence throughout the world.
- Identical twins have the same chromosomes and are the same sex. They have the same blood type, same eye and hair color, as well as the same nose, ear and lip shapes.
- Fraternal twins result from two fertilized eggs. They aren't any more alike than any two singletons born to the same parents.
- Fraternal twins may or may not be the same sex.
- Fraternal twinning is a genetic trait that tends to run in families.



Quick Tips for Parents of Multiples

New Parents

- Establish a list of priorities. Babies' needs will head the list, including feeding, bathing, cuddling, and sleeping. Rest for you should be high on the list as well.
- Accept help from anyone who offers.
- Treat your babies as individuals. Avoid referring to them as "the twins" or "the triplets." Instead, use their given names, and encourage family and friends to do the same.
- Take photos of each child separately. Like you, they will want individual pictures in the future.
- Build a one-to-one bond with each child. Look for unique talents and personality traits and offer praise often.
- Multiples may develop a special bond between them. Raise them as individuals but allow them to maintain and celebrate this bond.
- Speak clearly and read aloud to your multiples. Reading stimulates speech development and lays a foundation for literacy.
- Take walks with your babies. Just getting out of the house may boost your morale, especially during the challenges of the first year.
- If you are returning to work soon after the babies are born, look for a sitter or daycare clinic who will understand the needs of caring for "more than one."
- Your local parents of multiples club is a great resource for learning what to buy before the babies arrive. You'll only need one of certain things, and you'll need more than two of other things. Consult with other parents of multiples for guidance.
- Before buying, ask stores if they offer discounts for multiples!

Breastfeeding Multiples

- Many women successfully nurse their multiples! Members of a local parents of multiples club are good resources. Or consult your health care provider, local breastfeeding support group, or lactation consultant.
- Follow doctor's advice on proper diet, rest, nipple care, and breast pumping. Remember, your fluid intake should be one to one-and-a-half quarts more than usual.



Breastfeeding Multiples (con't)

- Alternate breasts for each feeding of your babies. One may require a larger amount of milk than the other(s) and sucking stimulates the breast to produce more. Bracelets and mobile apps are available to help you keep track.
- With twins, nurse your babies at the same time, if possible. Use the support of two bed pillows or a U-shaped nursing pillow.
- Don't be alarmed with the color and consistency of your babies' stools. They may be looser and lighter in color than those of bottle-fed babies.

Bottlefeeding Multiples

- Formulas come in many forms (powdered, concentrate, and ready-to-feed). Unless specified by your doctor, choose whichever is most convenient and follow preparation instructions carefully.
- Formula is also available in soy, rice, dairy, almond and coconut options. Seek advice from your healthcare provider for guidance.
- Use a chart or app to document feedings.
- If your babies require different formulas, buy different styles/colors of bottles/nipples so each baby gets the correct formula.
- Your doctor may recommend sterilizing bottles and nipples during the first few months. If using a dishwasher for bottles, additional sterilization may not be needed.
- If you have a partner or other children, encourage them to help with feedings.
- Take time to cuddle each baby after feeding and during burping.



Feeding Multiples

- When bottle feeding or breastfeeding, burp babies midway through and after feedings.
- Use the same spoon and bowl when babies are eating solid foods, unless either baby is sick. Feed baby food directly from the jar at room temperature, discarding any leftover food to avoid bacterial growth.
- Consult your doctor for advice on post-feeding sleeping positions.

Research Connections

Multiple Statistics

- Slightly more than half of all twins born are male.
- Approximately one-fourth of identical twins are mirror image twins (right side of one will match the left side of the co-twin).
- In this country, approximately one-third of all twins are identical, one-third are same sex fraternal and one-third are boy/girl fraternal.
- The first twin is often born head first, while the second twin is often breech or transverse. Slightly less than half of all twins are premature. For more information on premature infants, contact the Research and Membership department through the Multiples of America Executive Office.
- Statistics from Multiples of America research survey on multiple pregnancy reveal that 83 percent of all multiple pregnancies are diagnosed by the second trimester and 96 percent prior to delivery.



Pregnancy

- The average duration of a normal pregnancy is 40 weeks. In a twin pregnancy, average gestation is about 37 weeks.
- The interval between the births can vary from as little as three minutes to up to an hour or more. Sometimes the second baby must be repositioned for delivery.
- The average birth weight for singletons is 7 lbs., 7 oz. while for twins the average birth weight is 5 lbs., 5 oz. A difference of 2 to 3 lbs. in birth weights between twins is not unusual.
- Examination of the placenta is not a foolproof method of determining twin type.
- Whether multiples are monozygotic or dizygotic can be determined by DNA analysis of blood or cheek cells, complete blood studies, and other special tests.
- The CDC recommends the tetanus, diphtheria pertussis vaccine (Tdap) for:
 - Pregnant women: The CDC recommends that women get Tdap during each pregnancy, preferably between 27 and 36 weeks gestation, regardless of when they last had the shot.
 - Children age 11 to 18 who have completed a previous vaccine series for tetanus, diphtheria pertussis.
 - Adults 19 to 64. (If they plan to be around babies soon, it's best to get it at least two weeks beforehand.)
 - Adults 65 and older, if they plan to be around babies.

Incidence of Twin Birth

According to the website for the CDC (Center for Disease Control and Prevention), the 2021 twin birth rate (twins per 1,000 total births) was 31.2 per 1,000, a very slight increase from the 2020 rate of 31.1. The twin birth rate climbed steadily in the early 1980s, but has primarily been on the decline since 2014, showing a significant decline late in the pandemic's first year. Fraternal twins account for the differences in the twin rate, whereas the rate of identical twins is constant at approximately four per thousand. There were 114,161 twin deliveries in 2021.

Incidence of Higher Order Multiples

Higher Order Multiple births have become more common because of the availability of infertility treatments. However, the rate of triplet and higher order multiple births has dipped nearly 60% from its 1998 peak. According to the website for the CDC (Center for Disease Control and Prevention), the 2021 Higher Order Multiples birth rate was 80.0 per 100,000 births, a very slight increase from the 2020 rate of 79.6. There were 2,933 triplet births in 2021, and 148 births of quadruplets and other higher order multiples.

Folic Acid

Each year in the United States, about 4,000 pregnancies are affected by birth defects of the brain and neural tube (spinal cord). In 1998, the Food and Nutrition Board of the Institute of Medicine recommended that all women of childbearing age consume 4 mg of the B vitamin folic acid to reduce the risk of these defects. To get this recommended amount of folic acid, eat a healthy diet and take a multivitamin supplement every day. Foods high in folate include: orange juice, green leafy vegetables, beans, broccoli, fortified breakfast cereals, and enriched grain products.

Preventing Sudden Infant Death Syndrome

Many new parents are concerned about Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) happening to their newborn babies. SIDS is a rare, but devastating, occurrence when the infant is found not breathing, usually after sleep. The causes are unknown.

One theory is that some babies may have problems with arousal from sleep, especially very immature babies. When the baby is in a deep sleep and in a position that may be dangerous, such as against a pillow or soft object or on his/her stomach, the baby may not awaken easily when the airway becomes compromised and may suffocate.

The American Academy of Pediatrics has produced some guidelines to prevent Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. Several studies show lowered numbers of SIDS cases when these guidelines were followed:

- Put infants to sleep on their backs for every sleep.
- Use a firm, flat, non-inclined sleep surface to reduce the risk of suffocation or wedging/entrapment.
- Provide a place for infants to sleep in their parents' room, close to the parents' bed, but on a separate surface designed for infants, for at least the first 6 months.
- Feed breastmilk, since it is associated with a reduced risk of SIDS.
- Keep soft objects, such as pillows, pillow-like toys, quilts, comforters, mattress toppers, fur-like materials, and loose bedding (such as blankets and nonfitted sheets) away from the infant's sleep area.
- Offer a pacifier at naptime and bedtime.
- Avoid smoke and nicotine exposure during pregnancy and after birth.
- Avoid alcohol, marijuana, opioids, and illicit drug use during pregnancy and after birth.
- Avoid overheating and covering an infant's head.

Twinning fact:

Fraternal twinning is passed on as a genetic trait and appears in the women only. If you are a female and your mother had fraternal twins, you would have an increased chance of having fraternal twins yourself.

Your brothers would not have an increased chance, but they might pass the genetic trait on to their daughters, who would then have an increased chance of having fraternal twins.

Choosing a Stroller

There is no perfect stroller for all multiples. Families must decide which features are most important for their use. When shopping, consider this:

- Most strollers are made for babies four months or older. Only certain strollers allow infant car seats to lock into it.
- Larger wheels offer a more comfortable ride.
- Consider investing in a well-made stroller to gain safety, comfort, and durability. Parents of multiples tend to use strollers longer than parents of single-born children.
- Consider the weight of the stroller and the ease of loading it into a van or car.

Types of Strollers

- Convertible carriage/stroller: For small babies, not as convenient for toddlers.
- Side-by-side: A separate area for each baby. Size is usually twice as wide as single stroller. May not fit through many aisles or doorways.
- Tandem: One child in front of the other, either face-to-face sharing leg room or both facing forward. Narrow enough to easily navigate through doorways.

Many families of multiples have two strollers: one lightweight (double umbrella style) for quick trips, and another stroller that's more durable and comfortable for longer outings. Check with your local club about buying a used stroller from another member.





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Support – An inclusive national membership organization that provides support for all people connected with the work of raising multiples – by providing practical information and opportunities to network with others who share in the joys and challenges.

Education + Research – A national leader in educating all people connected with the work of raising multiples by providing access to the best information and advocating for additional research in the field.

Friendship + Community – An inclusive national membership organization that facilitates a community of people connected with the joys and challenges of raising multiples.



About Multiples of America

Multiples of America, also known as The National Organization of Mothers of Twins Clubs, Inc., is a support group for parents of twins and higher order multiples. We are a network of local clubs throughout the nation whose basic purposes are support, research and education.

Multiples of America is non-profit, funded by dues, donations and grants. Multiples of America supports local club development, cooperates with qualified researchers, conducts organizational research, serves as a clearing house of educational information, hosts an annual convention, and much more. With the exception of our Executive Director, all Multiples of America workers are volunteers from local clubs. Multiples of America offers information specific to multiple birth families to a worldwide audience through our website www.multiplesofamerica.org. We publish an online magazine for our members. Booklets and brochures on multiple-specific topics are also available.

Multiples of America provides a support services program geared to individual concerns. Our program greatly benefits those needing support that isn't available locally.

- Our Research and Membership Development department helps parents who have children with disabilities or illnesses, and also assists adults who may themselves have disabilities that impact their parenting skills.
- Bereavement Support outreach helps parents who experience the loss of one or more of their multiples.
- Single Parent outreach connects widowed, divorced, and never-married parents with opportunities to share information.
- Higher Order Multiples outreach offers support to parents of triplets, quadruplets, and more.
- LGBTQ outreach offers support to those families and raises awareness about issues faced by the LGBTQ community.

You can become a member of Multiples of America by joining a local club. To find a club near you, conduct an online search or visit our website at www.multiplesofamerica.org. If there isn't a club in your area, consider an Individual Affiliate membership. Please contact the Executive Office for more information or check out our Multiples of America website.

This is an exciting time for your family. We'd love to join you on your journey as a parent of multiple birth children!

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