

E Nurture

A newsletter for breastfeeding mothers

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Breastfeeding Twins

Twins...how exciting! **Yes, you can breastfeed twins!**

Since the amount of breastmilk produced is regulated by the baby's demand, two babies feeding at the breasts will tell the body to produce enough milk for two babies.

In the early days when you and your babies are just learning to breastfeed, it is usually easier to feed one baby at a time. This allows you to learn correct latch-on and positioning techniques. Later many moms will feed both babies at the same time for at least some feedings each day. Special U-shaped pillows are available to help support the babies at the breast for joint feedings. You can accomplish the same thing using bed pillows or folded blankets for support. Here are two suggestions:

- ☉ You can position the babies each in the cradle hold, with a head in each of your elbows and their feet crisscrossed on your lap.
- ☉ You can position one in the football hold with baby's head and shoulders supported by your hand, while his body is along your side, with his feet and bottom against the back of your chair. The other baby can be held in the cradle hold, with his feet in your lap; or in the football hold on the other side, with his feet toward your back.

Feeding both babies at the same time increases the prolactin level in your blood – the hormone responsible for increasing milk production. It also saves time for mom, who may feel like all she is doing is feeding babies! Since the milk lets-down and begins to flow in both breasts at the same time, feeding both babies together can let the more eager, stronger nurser help encourage the milk flow for the less active nurser.

Some moms will alternate the baby at the breast at each feeding, but this can be hard to remember. You might want to assign a breast to a baby for a day, and the next day switch them. Switching will help to keep the milk supply

balanced in both breasts if one baby suckles more actively than the other.

When one baby wakes to feed, be sure to awaken the other to feed, too. This will help you to consolidate time spent breastfeeding and maximize the interval between breast-feedings for mom to sleep, eat, shower, etc.

Although it saves time to feed both babies together, at least once a day take the time to feed each baby alone. Look for opportunities to spend time one-on-one with each baby when you can, to start to develop a special relationship with each little person.

Night nursings will continue for some time as with all newborns, so the challenge is to maximize rest for mom. When the babies are latching-on and staying attached well, you can nurse in bed with the help of some extra pillows. Put a couple of pillows behind your head and shoulders while you lie on your back. Then put one pillow at each of your sides to support your arm and the baby. The babies' heads are at the breasts with their feet coming together in mom's lap to form a V-shape. For individual nursing, mom can be on her side, with the baby snuggled in at breast-level to feed.

Some moms breastfeed exclusively, while others supplement the breastfeeding with a bottle of pumped breast milk or formula from time to time. For some, the occasional relief that a bottle feeding provides enables her to continue to breastfeed. However, others find that introducing bottles brings the breastfeeding to an end before they intended or were ready to stop.

Keep these things in mind as you make your decision:

- ☉ Since the baby uses his mouth and tongue very differently when feeding from the breast

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and bottles, giving bottles in the early weeks can contribute to difficulty latching-on to the breast, ineffective suckle, and sore nipples. Once the baby has mastered breastfeeding, an occasional bottle (once a day or several times a week) is usually not a problem.

- ☺ Frequent formula feeding will reduce the baby's "demand" for breastmilk and this causes a reduction in the "supply" of milk produced by the mom. This is often what leads to unplanned weaning from the breast.
- ☺ Introducing formula increases risk of allergies and other health problems for babies.
- ☺ Because mothers of twins are producing enough milk for two babies, missing a feeding can lead to over-fullness sooner than the mother of a single baby. Skipping a feeding when the breasts are overfull can lead to a breast infection (mastitis).
- ☺ Water bottles are unnecessary, provide no nutrients, but will produce wet diapers. This interferes with one of the signs of adequate feeding (six to eight wet diapers a day in the newborn period), because diapers will be wet even without adequate calorie intake.
- ☺ If babies have been receiving formula supplements regularly (perhaps because of hospitalization due to pre-term birth), be sure to withdraw them gradually as the babies nurse more at the breast and your milk supply gradually increases. Work with your doctor or a lactation consultant to accomplish this safely.

Growth spurts are days of more frequent breastfeeding, when a baby works to increase the amount of breastmilk being produced as his appetite and weight increase. Shorter intervals between feedings for a day or two trigger the body to make more milk. Then the baby returns to his usual nursing pattern, but gets more milk at each feeding. Expect growth spurts at about three weeks, six weeks, three months, and six months of age.

As a new mom, you need to recover from pregnancy and childbirth (which may mean recovering from surgery, if you had a Cesarean birth). You also have demands on your energy from taking care of your newborns and other children you may have. Concentrate on the essentials in the first weeks. Prioritize – take care of your babies, eat and drink plenty of nutritious foods, and sleep whenever you can. Limit visitors during the early weeks who only make you tired and interfere with your "game plan." Welcome all offers of help! People offer help because they really want to do something for you. Ask family and friends to make a casserole, run the vacuum cleaner, wash dishes, throw the clothes into the washer, etc. You will make them and yourself feel better!

As the babies get older, consider hiring a high school student to help for a couple of hours after school. They can vacuum, do laundry, pick-up the house, or play with the babies while you take a nap. Teenagers love babies, are good workers, and usually will work for what you can afford to pay. Call the Guidance Department at your local high school and ask for the names of some responsible teens, if you don't know any.

Know your sources of support, especially those family members and friends who will give you encouragement for breastfeeding and parenting your twins. Mothers of Twins Club provides an opportunity to share tips and information with other parents of multiples.

Be sure to read and learn about the basics of breastfeeding through books, Unity's "Nurture" newsletters, videos, breastfeeding classes, etc. Information on positioning and latch-on, increasing your milk supply, and signs of adequate intake are the same whether you are feeding one baby or more. Learn the basics, then adapt them to fit the needs of your larger family. These tips will help you get started.

For more information or help with breastfeeding twins, call the lactation consultants at
The Family Birth Place at Park Ridge Hospital.

Breastfeeding Helpline
(585) 368-4033