

TWINS AND MORE - BREASTFEEDING MULTIPLES

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When you learn you are going to be having twins you may experience a range of emotions from joy to worry. Suddenly you may find your expectations, plans and former decisions need to be changed. 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. Breastfeeding can also help you create a special 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

- Learn the basics of breastfeeding. See [Preparing to Breastfeed, Positioning and Latching, Establishing Your Milk Supply, and How to Know Your Baby is Getting Enough Milk](#) for information.
- Nursing early and often right after birth is the best way to get a good start to breastfeeding. However, if you or your babies have a health problem that requires you to be separated, this does not mean you have to give up the idea of breastfeeding.
- If one or both babies cannot nurse, colostrum can be collected most effectively using hand expression. If you need to continue expressing, a properly fitting, electric pump with sufficient suction will stimulate regular milk production. Plan on pumping both breasts every two to three hours during the day and at least once during the night. See [Establishing Your Milk Supply](#).
- Milk supply is regulated by the amount of milk that is removed by baby's drinking (or pumping). That's why nursing parents of twins usually produce enough milk for both babies.



Coordinating Nursings

- Once your twins are home and latching and drinking effectively, it may become easier for you to nurse them together for some feedings. However, as individuals, twins sometimes want or need to breastfeed one at a time. To feed them together, it can be helpful to use pillows to support your babies so your hands are free to help each one latch on correctly. It may feel awkward to latch both babies on until you get a bit of practice. You may want to have someone help you. Experimenting with different positions is also something to consider.
- In the first few weeks, it's a good idea to switch babies from one side to the other at alternate feedings. For example, Baby A takes the left breast at 7 am and Baby B takes the right breast. At the next feeding, Baby B takes the left breast and Baby A takes the right breast. This is helpful for the development of your babies' eyes and heads. It is also common for one breast to produce more milk than the other so it is important that both babies have access to both breasts.



Night Nursings

- You may find night nursings easier if you learn to nurse lying down. The position you find works best for you will likely depend on the size of your babies, your breasts and the length of your arms. You can nurse your babies one at a time or together, while reclining, lying nearly flat on your back or lying on your side. See Positioning and Latching. You can also get some ideas from the photos here or by contacting a La Leche League Canada Leader.



Taking Care of Yourself

- Try to take good care of yourself, eating well-balanced meals and drinking to thirst. Get as much rest as possible by sleeping whenever your babies sleep; even if they do not nap at the same time, at least sit down and rest. It's a good idea to accept all offers of help with meals, laundry and older siblings, if you can.
- Congratulate yourself for being able to nourish and nurture two little human beings at once!

Ambivalent Feelings

Before, during and after birth, some nursing parents of twins have mixed emotions about their “double blessings”. Unfortunately, they are often isolated from others because of bedrest or fatigue, or their negative feelings are not understood by those around them. These feelings are a normal reaction to a stressful situation and should not be ignored or discounted. If you find yourself feeling this way, know that you are not alone. It can be very helpful to talk to other mothers of twins.



Finding Support

All new mothers benefit from help, but mothers of twins need extra help. You will have the extra challenge of holding, carrying and going out with more than one baby. You may feel isolated, frustrated or nervous. The help and support of spouses, friends and relatives can make a big difference. Ask them to read [How Partners and Supporters Can Help](#) for ideas of what they can do. Remind them that you will likely need help throughout the first year and beyond and not just the first few months. If family and friends are not very available, you may want to consider hiring a “helper,” if you can. Perhaps a high school student could come by after school to hold or play with one or both of the babies while the parent attends to other things. (This could be a great gift idea!)

A La Leche League Leader can provide you with more information about breastfeeding, chestfeeding or bodyfeeding, whatever word works in your family. Leaders can often help you connect with other parents of twins. Local LLLC Groups also offer valuable peer support during this incredible time in your life. Find an LLLC Group [here](#).