

Breastfeeding Multiple Babies

Breastfeeding will provide many benefits for you and your babies. This brochure will help you learn about breastfeeding multiple babies.

If you have any questions, talk to your nurse, or lactation consultant.

Before birth: Preparing for breastfeeding

It will take time for you and your babies to learn how to breastfeed. Before the babies are born, it is important for you and your partner to be prepared and learn as much as possible about breastfeeding. Read recommended materials about breastfeeding multiples, such as *Mothering Multiples* by Karen Kerkhoff-Gromada.

You will need support while breastfeeding multiples.

- Ask for help from family and friends for those first few days at home.
- Talk with other mothers who breastfed multiples. Some support groups include:
 - Neighborhood Parents Network at nnpnparents.org.
 - Multiples of America at multiplesofamerica.org.
- Find out if your insurance company provides coverage for a breast pump and lactation support.

Beginning breastfeeding after birth

While breastfeeding, you will hold and interact with your babies. This helps you get to know and bond with each baby. Each baby's ability to breastfeed will be affected by the following:

- Length of the pregnancy
- Baby's physical maturity
- Baby's ability to latch on and suck

It takes practice, patience and coordination to get started with breastfeeding. If you have any questions or issues, ask your nurse for help.

- Offer each baby the chance to breastfeed within 1 hour after birth, if possible.
- Hold each of your babies skin-to-skin soon after birth and then frequently for the first few months.
- Each baby needs to nurse at least 8 to 12 times in 24 hours. Keep a record to help you keep track of feedings (see Breastfeeding Diary).

- Keep your babies in the room with you during the night to learn their feeding cues and to practice breastfeeding.
- Avoid bottles, formula and pacifiers for the first month unless instructed by the physician.
- Nurse one baby at a time until breastfeeding is going well.

Tandem breastfeeding

As the mother of twins or triplets, practice putting your babies to your breast, one at a time and then together, if desired. Breastfeeding 2 babies at the same time, 1 on each breast, is called tandem breastfeeding. Tandem breastfeeding can save time and allow you more time to rest. When at least one of the babies latches on easily, you can try to feed them together. Achieving this may take time.

Create a nursing station

- Find a comfortable location such as a large chair with a foot rest, bed, couch or floor.
- Use plenty of pillows to support your back and the babies. A large pillow designed for tandem nursing may be helpful.
- Have a large glass of water with a straw nearby to drink.
- Have a healthy snack nearby to eat.

Positioning your babies

Find a position that is most comfortable for you and your babies. As an example, hold one baby in each arm as in the “football hold” (see Figure 1). Place pillows in your lap to support each baby up to the breast. Use your forearms to hold each baby close. Your hand should be supporting the babies at the back of the neck.

Figure 1



If you have help, ask your helper to hand you one baby at a time. Some mothers prefer to latch the easier baby first, then once the milk is flowing, the 2nd baby can be latched. Other mothers prefer to latch the more difficult baby first while she has 2 hands to ensure a proper latch. Once the first baby is latched, your helper can hand you the 2nd baby. Your helper may need to hold that baby in place while you latch the 2nd baby.

If you are alone, start out with each baby close by in a safe place such as 2 bouncy seats or car seats. Pick up each baby and put them both in position on your pillow. Help the first baby latch onto your breast. For the second baby, you can tilt the baby on his side and scoop him up using your hand and forearm. Once both babies are nursing, you can keep them in place with your forearms and elbows.

Many mothers will switch babies and breasts for each feeding or every 24 hours. For triplets, many moms will feed 2 babies at the breast together and offer the 3rd baby both breasts afterwards. Then, she will rotate the babies so they all have their turn to go first.

Pumping breast milk

If you are not able to exclusively breastfeed, consider using your own pumped breast milk. Know that any amount of breast milk benefits your babies. To keep making milk, use a high-quality, double electric breast pump to express your milk at least every 3 hours (8 times a day or more). This will help increase your milk supply. Follow recommended guidelines for storing and using pumped breast milk.

Recommended resources

- Mothering Multiples website by Karen Kerkhoff Gromada, MSN, RN, IBCLC, lactation consultant
karengromada.com
- La Leche League
877.4.LALECHE (452.5324)
lilli.org

