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“I bought mine when my boys were 6 mos...didn't get it until they were 10 mos (was on backorder that long). My boys will be 3 in October and we still use it. Words cannot express how much I love this stroller. Worth every cent. ♥”

“I received my Mountain Buggy Urban Double Stroller 2006 three weeks ago and love it. I haven't used it for shopping yet since I can still use the Snap N Go stroller. The Mountain Buggy is so easy to use and get in and out of the vehicle. It is definitely worth the purchase!!!!!! Thanks for the help.”

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\*Read what other moms of twins have written on the [www.TwinsMagazine.com](http://www.TwinsMagazine.com) message board (TMMB) about their strollers at <http://www.twinsmagazine.com/vbulletin/forumdisplay.php?f=88>

\*Post your own questions and comments. Search TMMB for “Mountain Buggy,” “stroller,” and “mountain”

\*Check out the “Strollers” sub-forum in the “Car Seats, Cribs, Gear, Gifts, Strollers and Stuff” forum.



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Kyle and Mia, 4, are residents of Centennial, Colorado. Kyle loves music and bugs. Mia is an aspiring ballerina who loves animals. Their humor keeps the family laughing 24/7.

Cover Photography by Covalli Photography

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## New year, new leaves, new book...

If you're like me, the start of each year means turning over some new leaves. Ever-optimistic, I'm eager to make life better henceforth. So here are my thoughts about "new leaves" for parents of twins—

So much of what I've read and written about during 2006 indicates parents of twins—and parents of singletons, too!—would do well to

- play more games with their kids, as a family
- turn off the TV, permanently (It's BAD for kids!)
- read a lot of books together
- see that kids play outdoors every day for at least an hour—parents, too
- quit obsessing about food—eat only when hungry, consume small amounts
- turn off the junk food spigot.

Many of these strengthen the bonds between parents and twins. They help engender inner serenity too. And making a practice of indulging in strawberries and apples for snacks and desserts forms great habits. Reading and outdoor play sparks the imagination, and helps quiet the inner turmoil of life on the fast track.

Does this sound like a plan we can all dive into?

I worry and wonder a lot about the TV thing, especially given our national craze for electronic games, and using TV, videos and movies as babysitters for our infants, toddlers and children. It's been known for years now that ever-flickering images of the TV and movie screen can trigger epileptic seizures in children and adults with epilepsy. But only recently did we learn, as the result of a huge national study, that there is a direct correlation between the amount of TV-watching children do in their early years (birth to age 3) and the astronomical increase in diagnoses of ADD, ADHD, hyperactivity disorders, and very possibly the range of autism-spectrum disorders as well.

All I know for sure is that we should be turning off our TVs, GameBoys, Nintendos, and even those so-cute little baby-games that are electronic screens with push-button responses. Even the so-called "educational toys" and videos may be engendering nightmarish long-term problems because of their effects on babies' and children's brains and neural-pathway development. TV-watching has been targeted as a bad-boy since the Fifties, when I was a kid. But now we are starting to get some clear evidence that it causes developmental problems in children that may last for their lifetimes.

TV-watching for babies and children under 4 can't be a good thing.

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You'll absolutely love this book, compiled and published in collaboration TWINS™ Magazine. It's off the presses. Susan Heim, a Florida mom of twins who was a senior editor of the "Chicken Soup..." series when they were launched, selected 82 stories that are the ultimate affirmation of families and family life. Every story will remind you of the important connections linking you with families like yours blessed with twins, triplets and more!

Each of you is amazing...and this book presents stories that serve as "touchstones" reminding you of how special you, and all the families in our world of twins, really are!

Order now...see page 47 or go online to

[http://www.twinsmagazine.com/twice\\_the\\_love.html](http://www.twinsmagazine.com/twice_the_love.html)



EDITOR IN CHIEF

# TWINS™

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**PUBLISHER**

Donald E.L. Johnson

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

Susan J. Alt

(303) 967-0128

[twins.editor@businessword.com](mailto:twins.editor@businessword.com)

**ART DIRECTOR/WEBMASTER**

Carolyn Diaz Muñoz

(303) 967-0134

**ADVERTISING SALES MANAGER**

Susan J. Alt

[susan.alt@businessword.com](mailto:susan.alt@businessword.com)

**CIRCULATION MANAGER**

Richard Rhinehart

**CUSTOMER SERVICE**

Sonya Craney

(888) 55-TWINS

**EDITORIAL CONSULTANTS**

Thomas Bouchard Jr., Ph.D., Herbert L. Collier, Ph.D., Jessie Reynolds Groothuis, M.D., Donald Keith, M.D., Louis Keith, M.D., Patricia Malmstrom, M.A., Barry E. McNamara, Ed.D., Francine J. McNamara, M.S.W., C.S.W., Marion Meyer, Leslie Montgomery, R.N., Eileen Pearlman, Ph.D., Roger L. Rawlings, R.Ph., Nancy L. Segal, Ph.D., Harriet Simons, Ph.D., Jerry L. Wyckoff, Ph.D.

11211 E. Arapahoe Rd., Suite 101  
Centennial, Colorado 80112-3851  
TEL (303) 290-8500 Fax (303) 290-9025

Web site:

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**Georgia group sets first big meet**

Kathy Dolan, the mom of twins in Queens, NY, who is the major force behind the nationwide push for twins-in-school legislation, is a singer/songwriter/musician who sent us an e-mail Oct. 23. She said, "Vic (my husband) and I have created an incredible song and video for our armed forces. It is called Angel By My Side. View it at: <http://www.sharkle.com/video/106525/> or at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7DIyDOaQ-dI>. In less than three days the sites received over 3,000 hits, Dolan reported. Since then, it has received tens of thousands more. "We know the message behind the song needs to be shared, but as unknown songwriters the likelihood is that will never happen on a large scale. We are more than willing to give the song and video to someone who has contacts in the field," she told TWINS™. "Although we are living in a very divided country, our citizens should be united behind our troops and their families who have lost so much," she added. Kathy's brother Sean is singing and playing drums, her husband Vic is on guitars, and Kathy herself is singing, playing keyboards and accordion. Mike Todd is on bass. Anybody out there in TwinsLand who's able to help Kathy and Vic win broader exposure for their music? If so, e-mail her at [kathydolan@nyc.rr.com](mailto:kathydolan@nyc.rr.com).

**Georgia group sets first big meet**

The Georgia Organization for Mothers of Multiples (GOMOM—[www.gomomc.org](http://www.gomomc.org)) is planning a Multiples Day at Wild Adventures Theme Park ([www.wildadventures.net](http://www.wildadventures.net)), Valdosta, Ga., Apr. 14, 2007, the new statewide organization's first big get-together. Attendees will have a catered lunch together at the park. The group intends to invite state legislators to attend in an effort to mobilize a push for twins-in-school legislation. Tickets will be good for Apr. 14-15, discounted for GOMOM families. Hotel discounts will be available in the area. Contact Jacqueline Landa at [jac@Landa.org](mailto:jac@Landa.org).



**Twin skaters twirl their way to Junior finals**

Alex and Danielle Gamelin, 13, a twin-team brother and sister figure skating duo, took first place honors in Juvenile Dance at the North Atlantic Regional Championships in Jamestown, N.Y. This win qualified them to compete in the U.S. Junior Finals held in Cleveland in December.

Danielle and Alex, born in the Boston area in 1993 during the huge blizzard that blanketed the city in two feet of snow, were inspired to begin figure skating at age 3 when they watched the world figure skating championships on TV, from Alberta, Canada. They were fixated on the ice dancing of Pasha Grishuk and Evgeny Platov, and imitated the two, gliding across the floor of their house in stocking feet.



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Dr. William Sears  
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The twin-team didn't even begin to skate until 2000. Within three years, they were being coached by international professionals, and soon had ratcheted up to three lessons a week because of their enthusiasm and potential. They've also studied ballet, ballroom dance, ice dance and had strength training.

The 8th Graders are on the honor roll at their middle school in Bellmore, N.Y., and are up at 5 a.m. daily to skate for two hours before school. They dream of making it to the next Olympic competition. Their official website has more pictures of this amazing dancing-duo. [www.icetwins.com](http://www.icetwins.com)

### Twins in triplicate

Lisa and Hythem Salem, Telford, Penn., are proud parents of three sets of same-family twins adopted from Russia. And it all happened by serendipity.

Initially, the Salems planned to adopt only one set of twins, fraternal Joe and Sophia, as infants. They applied to adopt a Russian baby and received a videotape from a Russian orphanage in August 1998. Joe and Sophia had been born three months prematurely and were severely malnourished. U.S. doctors feared for their health and advised the Salems that the babies might have suffered brain damage or have cerebral palsy.

But as the Salems recounted on NBC's *"Dateline"*, they pursued the adoption despite the risks and traveled to Russia five months later to claim their new family members. While visiting the orphanage, the Salems heard rumors that Joe and Sophia had twin siblings still living with their birth parents.

Five years passed. In early 2004, Lisa Salem began investigating Joe and Sophia's biological family in Russia, thinking it would be good for her children to know more of their heritage. Surprise! Joe and Sophia had four siblings in Russia—two sets of same-sex twins. Both sets, girls age 12 and boys age 10, were by then living in orphanages, having been removed from their biological family because of neglect. They'd been split up and their orphanages were far apart.

The Salems took one look at the four, and how much they resembled Joe and Sophia, and their minds were made up. They traveled to Russia in April, 2004, to reunite the family and adopted the remaining four June 24, 2004.

The Salems' twin daughters, Julianne Nadya and Selene Vera, are now 14, in 8th grade. The boys, Jacob Sergei and Samuel Nikolai, are 12, in 6th grade. The youngest, Sophia Ksenia and Joseph Maksim, 8, are in 3rd grade.

The four older children were held back a year in school so they'd have time to catch up in language and academics. Despite learning her first English words only two years ago, Julianne made the honor roll every semester last year and was named Citizen of the Month last May. Selene, too, has earned mostly As and Bs. Jake and Sam have also done well in school.

Joe and Sophia weren't held back because they were adopted as



Triple-doubles, all born to the same Russian parents, are happy to be together in the Salem family after being separated for a number of years.

babies and learned English from infancy.

Lisa finds it fascinating that all three first-born twins seem to excel in math and logic, while all three second-born twins demonstrate exceptional skills in reading and art. "We could certainly do a daily twin study in our family," laughs Lisa Salem about her brood. "We all enjoy making these observations about our twin tribe."

Lisa thought it was better for all three sets of twins to be together with their co-twins in the same classroom—in their different grades, of course—when they first started school in the U.S. But she has since separated them so they'd each develop individual strengths.

Joe and Sophia, in particular, had an unusually close bond from infancy that indicated to Lisa they'd probably do better in kindergarten if kept together, "which wasn't something our school district typically allows," said Salem. She discussed the reasoning behind her desire to keep Joe and Sophia together, and the school approved.

But as it turned out, Joe and Sophia "did not progress in areas that they needed to because they always relied on each other in areas where one was stronger," she said. Joe relied on Sophia to organize him and for logic, while Sophia relied on Joe for social skills and friendships.



“It was worth (keeping them together) for the first year because their bond was so strong, and I wanted them to gradually become individuals,” said Lisa Salem. In 1st grade Joe and Sophia went into separate classrooms, because Lisa wanted each child to begin becoming stronger within themselves in areas where they had been relying on each other. Joe and Sophia are comfortable being in separate classrooms, she said.

The two older sets of twins also dealt with having to be in separate classrooms, but the transition was eased by sharing some teachers and classes, and often having lunch together. They often helped each other with homework, as well.

The three sets of twins enjoy being together and rarely fight, says Lisa. “They often choose being together over playing with friends, and sometimes forgo sleepovers with friends to pitch a tent in the back yard where all six camp out for the night.”

Lisa and Hythem Salem established a fund to help with the expenses of raising their adopted “triplicate” family from Russia: Salem Twins New Hope Fund, c/o Commerce Bank, 325 Main Street, Harleysville, PA 19438.

— Laurel Porterfield

### Breastfeeding improves mental health

Babies who are breastfed longer than six months have significantly better mental health throughout childhood, and possibly throughout life, according to a study reported in Science Daily. The findings are based on data from the groundbreaking Raine Study at the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, located in Perth, Australia. The Raine Study tracked growth and development of more than 2,500 West Australian children over 16 years.

Researchers suspect bioactive factors in breast milk play an important role in the rapid early brain development occurring in the first year of an infant’s life.

“Even when we adjust the results to take into account other factors such as the parents’ socio-economic situation, their education, their happiness and family functioning, we see that children that were breastfed for at least six months are at lower risk of mental health problems,” lead researcher Wendy Oddy said.

Children breastfed for less than six months, compared with those breastfed six months or longer, had a 52% increased risk of a mental health problem at 2 years of age, a 55% increased risk at age 6, and 61% greater risk at age 8.

The analysis is based on a scientifically recognized checklist of child behavior used to assess all of these children at ages 2, 6, 8 and 10 years.

Children who were breastfed for longer periods had significantly lower rates of delinquent, aggressive and anti-social behavior, and overall were less depressed, anxious or withdrawn, researchers found.

The results of this study provide powerful evidence that women should receive more encouragement and support to help them breastfeed for longer, Dr. Oddy said.

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## Mirror-imaging

I was reading a recent issue, and was struck by the information on mirror-image twins. I believe my identical girls are mirror image—they have opposite-handedness, the same tooth came in at the same time but on opposite sides, opposite hair cowlicks, and one has an “outie” belly button, and one has an “innie” belly button. They turned 3 last summer, and I started teaching them Hooked on Phonics. I have noticed that one girl picks up on each letter pretty easily, while the other has trouble remembering letters and gets them confused. The one who is left-handed is the one having trouble remembering and identifying letters. However, she is ahead of her sister in physical tasks (fine motor and gross motor skills). I have looked for information on mirror-image twins, and it seems that there is really nothing out there. I really would like to know more about it, and this possible link to right brain/left brain activity.

Michelle Donnell  
Speech-Language Pathologist, Springdale High School  
Springdale, Ark.  
Via e-mail



I read the Mailbox letter and response (Sept./Oct., 2006) about mirror-image twins with interest. I think I have mirror-image 7-year-old twin boys—one is right-handed and one is left-handed. When their first teeth came in, one got the bottom right, the other got the bottom left. When they lost their first tooth, one lost the bottom right, the other the bottom left, within a week of each other. I'd love to know more about mirror-image twins.

Colette Ottens  
Marysville, Kan.  
Via e-mail

## “Mirror-image” writing...ever heard of this?

I have twin girls age 6 who have a problem. I saw your address in TWINS™ Magazine and wonder if you could help me. One of my twins writes in “mirror image,” not backwards but mirror-imaged. Do you know what this problem is? Is there a technical name for it? Is it a “twin thing?” Do you know of anyone else who has had this problem, and if so could you forward contact information?

Any information you can provide would be much appreciated. Feel free to forward this e-mail to anyone who might help.

Robert Mancini  
Via e-mail

## Have ID twins had ID twins?

Love your magazine. I recently read about a married couple in the U.K. who were each identical twins, and then they, in turn, recently had identical twins themselves. ([http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/news/news.html?in\\_article\\_id=398377&in\\_page\\_id=1770&in\\_a\\_source=&ct=5](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/news/news.html?in_article_id=398377&in_page_id=1770&in_a_source=&ct=5))

The article claims there are “no records of identical twins ever having had identical twins anywhere in the world.”

Yet, I'm almost certain I read an article sometime during the last five years in your magazine that mentioned this very thing happening. In fact, I recall the story because it was so amazing to me: One set of identical twins married another set of identical twins, and one of those couples (supposedly) had a set of identical twins themselves.

Is there any way to do a search on previous “Twins” articles to confirm my recollection? I'm extremely curious.

Dan Blitz  
Milwaukee, Wisc.  
Via e-mail

*Editor's note: We looked but couldn't find this story. Yet in my way-back memory, I seem to recall something similar. Do any of our eagle-eyed readers with steel-trap memories out there remember this?*

## Twins are self-trained to use potty

As a mother of 2-year-old fraternal twin girls I want to share with other mothers of multiples some suggestions on how to potty train. One of my daughters potty-trained at 22 months and the other is currently training at 24 months. Everyone always seems amazed and asks me how I did it. The truth is, I didn't potty-train my twins—they did it themselves and I just helped.

Both girls told me when they were ready. At around 18 months, they began showing interest in the toilet, such as flushing it. So my husband and I bought them a training potty. The first one to potty train would pull at her diaper when she went to the bathroom and tell me “potty.” The second one started sitting on the potty by herself after she took a bath. She also has figured out how to take off her diaper and doesn't want to wear it any more.

The key seemed to be my willingness to go at this full-force, which meant hanging around the house for almost two weeks per child. When my twins woke up in the morning, I put them on the potty and dressed them in a pair of underpants. I liked putting them in underwear instead of a pull-up so they could feel themselves having an accident. (Neither one liked having an accident.) When they were dressed in underwear, I set a timer for 15 minutes. When the timer went off the twin would sit on the potty for two minutes, or until she went potty, whichever came first.

Forcing each girl to sit on the potty for two minutes accomplished a few things: First, it provided adequate time to go to the bathroom. Second, it stopped the child from telling me every minute they had to go potty.

I repeated this process for one whole day while the children were awake (during naptime they wore a pull-up diaper). After a few accidents in the morning, each had learned to tell me she had to go potty by afternoon. The next day, I let them tell me by themselves without the timer when they had to go potty. Within two weeks, each was potty-trained during waking hours.

I also discovered I confused my kids if I put them in pull-ups when we went out of the house. Now, when we leave the house,

I put the training potty into the back of our van for easy access. I line the inside of the potty with a large Ziploc bag, so after one or both goes to the bathroom I can toss in the toilet paper, close it and throw it away.

Carin O'Hayre  
Castle Rock, Colo.

**More questions about raising bilingual twins**

I awaited the article on raising bilingual twins (Sept./Oct. 2006) with great anticipation and wanted to let you know that unfortunately I was disappointed. There is a big difference between the experience of someone like (author) Cynthia House Nooney, who has a part-time babysitter who speaks a different language with the children, and a family whose parents speak one or two different languages in the home.

The article was fine for people interested in why a mommy-and-me Spanish class might be good for brain development. It was a good introduction to some basic issues of language development in infants and toddlers (not just twins) but didn't address any of the difficult decisions or dilemmas of a bilingual family.

As a mother raising 2½-year-old twin boys bilingually with my husband, the questions we face daily include the following: Should I speak English rather than Hebrew even if I make occasional grammatical mistakes or my accent isn't good, to ensure that they

get enough Hebrew? Is it polite to speak to them in Hebrew in public rather than English? What can we do to ensure that when they start preschool, they aren't too behind in English? And what can we do when they start preschool to ensure that we keep up the Hebrew at home?

We have friends who are raising children with two different languages—not including English. What do they do when their children are playing with others and can't communicate? Do twins maintain a foreign language better when they can speak to each other?

Maybe someone with more personal experience with the issue would have been able to write the article that I was hoping for.

Rachael Arenstein  
Via e-mail

**These twins did better in separate classrooms**

"Place them in separate classrooms, please," I requested cheerfully, when I registered my twin sons for kindergarten. The school secretary exhaled with relief. She had been bracing for a battle. But my preference matched school policy perfectly.

I'm Mom to identical twin boys, William and Wesley, who entered preschool together and then promptly dragged their carpet squares to opposite corners of the room. Knowing they were together helped me get back out the door (just like bunk beds somehow make it easier to say a firm "Good night!"). But I don't think it made much



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difference to them.

By kindergarten, I knew the boys were ready for separate classrooms. And I have never regretted that decision. Wesley's an extrovert who likes to be top dog, whereas William is more introverted and can play second fiddle a bit too willingly. Other times, the boys trigger each other into exploding like whirling dervishes in competitive rage.

So, separation prevents one from overshadowing the other, and also keeps that tooth-and-claw rivalry out of the learning environment. Best of all, my quieter, less confident son has grown more self-assured. His current teacher says he is a leader in his 2nd-grade classroom.

I have to admit, my skin crawls when someone refers to Wesley and William as "The Twins". Alliterative names aside, I have consciously fought the temptation to treat the boys as a matched set. People ask how I tell them apart. To me, they are like night and day. They behave, speak, move, and relate differently. Anyone who can't tell them apart hasn't gotten to know them. When you go beyond the surface, you see the unique gems underneath.

But that surface sameness is a powerful distraction. Children and adults confuse them every day. I think a classroom where they don't have to deal with the constant question, "Which one are you?" is a gift.

As a parent, I've learned to trust my instincts. I felt my boys would fare better starting school in separate classrooms. But I would support a parent who felt the opposite just as intensely. We know our own kids best.

I believe schools should consider each situation independently, and give parental input heavy weight. Blanket policies rarely make sense when it comes to children and education.

My sons couldn't wait to start kindergarten. Other children might be eased through a rough transition by the comfort of having a sibling nearby. I think the time for separation will come soon, however, in most cases. Multiples are individual human beings, foremost, and entitled to enough space to begin to figure out what that means.

Perhaps most telling, William and Wesley love having different teachers. They seem to know they need "a room of their own" to thrive and grow. And I echo their wisdom. I hope to nurture confident young men who realize they are much more than half of a pair, or a walking guessing game.

I want each child to feel free to find his own path. In our case, separate classrooms have reinforced that critical value.

Amy Stuart Taylor  
West Lafayette, Ind.  
Via e-mail

*(Amy has a PhD in School Psychology and worked within school systems for 10 years before becoming a full-time writer.)*

### Desperate for help: TTTS surgery looms

I was diagnosed last Monday (*note: early September, 2006*) with TTTS. In a nutshell, here is my situation: I have already been scheduled for surgery with Dr. Ruben Quintero, on Sept. 12. His fee was

lowered to \$4,500 for me, because Florida Medicaid won't cover "fetal therapy." Tampa General Hospital, which he works in, wants \$12,500 up front before touching me. This is a total of \$17,000.

I have tried every possible foundation I can think of to call, from the Shriners to the March of Dimes, all the Florida pregnancy and family agencies, and none of them can help. Financial representatives of the hospital say the money must be given to them in the form of a cashier's check by Sept. 11. What a great date.

Is there anyone out there you can think of who can help me? I don't know where to turn. I have \$4,000 raised so far, have all my cars up for sale, and don't know what else to do.

Even if you can't help me with any info, I just wanted you to know Medicaid won't cover out-of-state surgery costs. Even in Florida, where Dr. Quintero is based, they won't cover (costs).

All I can concentrate on right now is trying to raise money to try to get my babies back to normal.

Please let me know as soon as you can ... the clock is ticking.

Marcy Shortuse  
Englewood, Fla.  
Via e-mail

*Editor's note: We responded to Marcy's plea and referred her to several additional foundations we thought might be able to help, including the TTTS Foundation and the Foundation for Fetal Hope.*

### Postscript to TTTS surgery... (Received Oct. 15)

I had the surgery, after having a fund drive to raise money for the hospital and doctor, on Sept. 12. It took a little over an hour.

An ultrasound the day before my surgery revealed my babies had advanced to Level 3—they wouldn't have survived much longer.

As of last week's ultrasound, the fluid levels had almost completely stabilized. The babies are still very small, but apparently doing quite well. It was a miracle that Dr. Quintero performed.

Now I have about \$20,000 of medical bills to pay off, but it was well worth it. I appreciate your concern, and hope to submit an article to your magazine to explain the dangers of TTTS. Even today, years after this surgery was initiated, babies are misdiagnosed and many parents aren't given the option of surgery. Many babies die.

I can't believe private insurance carriers and Medicaid in so many states won't cover this surgery. It is mind-blowing, and needs to change. I have been in contact with our governor, Jeb Bush, and even he doesn't know quite how to proceed to change things quickly.

I want to help educate people about the problem and how to be their own advocates when demanding to have the surgery, no matter where they have to go or how much they have to pay for it. Having twins—much less identical twins—is truly a gift, and to have it callously disregarded is mind-numbing.

Marcy Shortuse  
Via e-mail

### "Controlling & Strict" vs. "Love & Be Loved"

Regarding your Editor's Letter, "Are we failing our children by not 'being The Boss?'" (Nov./Dec., 2006): I think the mistake we (as

## mail box

parents) make is when we feel these two terms are at odds with each other. To control is to love. A 3-year-old is incapable of making sound decisions. To be a friend is to be a guide. Simplify your life by doing both!

I keep reminding my husband that teaching restraint and control to our energy-filled 3½-year-old twin boys is representative of our love for them. I am convinced that without boundaries or consequences these two could (best) me on a day when I have not brought my A-Game—and my kids are very well-behaved and polite.

I honestly cannot imagine the stress levels that would come with raising children who from the start are overactive, exhibiting poor behavior. We are fortunate to have had ample support systems in place—active day care teachers and two sets of grandparents to assist us along the way.

We take time to articulate clearly our expectations and always, always look them straight in the eye.

You can be a friend and be in control. It takes balance and coordination, but it is possible.

Kristi Wheeler Bailey, mom of fraternal,  
Alexander and Ethan  
Marketing & Sales Mgr., West Virginia Wireless  
Via e-mail

### Home schooling twins: Does it work well?

Hi! I love your magazine. My twins are about to turn 1 year old., I homeschool my older children, and I would love to see an article about the special joys and challenges of homeschooling twins.

Jeanne Gilbert  
Via e-mail

*Editor's note: We're scheduling another homeschooling article in an upcoming issue this year. Please stay tuned.*

### Twin A vs. Twin B: Should parents tell?

I would like to offer another side to your response (Sept./Oct., 2006, Mailbox) to the mother who does not want to advertise which of her children was born first. You seem to think that it is the beginning of a lifetime of twin "labeling," but I would like to disagree.

I completely respect this mother's feelings, but I think every family needs to deal with the situation in a way that feels comfortable. I have a 6-year-old daughter and identical 4-year-old boys. In our family, it is important that everyone has his or her own place.

Our daughter knows that she is the princess. She prides herself on being "the big sister." She enjoys telling people about the amount of work it takes to raise two younger brothers, speaking as if she is raising them on her own. The boys look very much alike, and our friends and family often have difficulty telling them apart. Certainly, strangers see mostly similarities. For them, their placement in the family is crucial. Though they were born a mere 60 seconds apart (emergency c-section), they are thrilled to know that they have full ownership to a place in the family.

The older brother (twin A) appreciates being "the big brother" and "in the middle" of our three children. Our youngest child (twin

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B) is thrilled to know he is the “baby of the family.”

In our family, there is a place for everyone, and everyone has a place. My husband and I do not feel that we have labeled our children. Rather, we feel we have given them identity. As survivors of twin-to-twin-transfusion syndrome (TTTS), our boys have earned their story and their rightful place in our family.

Julie Kraus  
Santa Clara, Calif.  
Via e-mail

### Need creative ways to help boys burn energy

I'm a mother of very active, curious, twin boys who are 26 months old. As soon as they open their eyes, they ask to go outside. We have a nice backyard that is very child-friendly. I take them to parks and for walks trying to burn off some of their energy. I thought it would get easier with my twins once they got older, but it seems as if it's getting much more difficult.

If I turn my head for a second, they are getting into some sort of mischief. It's like their brains are working together figuring things out. I noticed that my older twin by two minutes, Joshua, gets aggressive with his brother, Matthew. Joshua also enjoys teasing Matthew by taking what Matthew already has. He thinks it's a game.

Time-outs are all a game to Joshua. He will sit in his time-out for two minutes and then say, “Sorry” and hug his brother. And then Joshua does the same thing again.

In the fall I enrolled my twins and me in a parent education program, like a preschool where I interact with them. I think it will be healthy for my boys to be in a more structured program with other toddlers.

Do you have other suggestions for fun activities with toddler twins? Suggestions on discipline?

Jamie  
Via e-mail

*Editor's note: Check out Karen Forman's article on being stuck inside during winter doldrums with wired toddler-twins, pages 32-34. She has great ideas. And we've had tons of articles on twin-discipline tips. We publish a Special Report on disciplining twins, and also a Toddler Twins Sourcebook 2, available at the TWINS Bookshelf, see page 47, or online as www.TwinsMagazine.com. Both of these receive rave reviews from moms of twins.*

### Wants modeling careers for her twins

How can I get our twins in pictures, on magazine covers, in local commercials, etc. I am sure everyone thinks their twins are just the cutest things ever—I know I do. I would like to get more of their pictures out to publishers to use in magazine ads, commercials, etc. The only folks I know who do this are the Ganz Twins, Lisa and Debbie, identical twins who run Twinstalent.tv and



Twinsworld.com. I have subscribed to their e-mail group for nearly two years and absolutely nothing has come up in the Denver area or for identical twins in my twins' age group.

Caitlin Smith  
Denver, Colo.  
Via e-mail

*Editor's note: We don't recommend specific agents or agencies, but agencies abound, Caitlin. See Rachel Bondi's story in this issue, page 44. We have another story coming up in the March/April issue, too, since this is a question we receive very frequently.*

### Are there programs to help us financially?

My wife and I are expecting two new additions to our already large family. (We have four other children. The oldest is 7.) I just got the ultrasound and our twins are healthy and active. Before my family and I found out that we were expecting more children we made the decision to move from Philadelphia, to Seattle. With our plans to move already set and made, I feel for the first time nervous and a tad bit scared. My wife and I have expected children almost every year we were married. So we're no strangers to having children.

Things got tight after every birth, but we made it. Now with twins I'm worried. Fortunately we kept clothes and some other items. However, the car won't fit us all anymore. The income we squeezed to make ends meet will be a little tighter, and I am worried.

Do you know of any programs that assist parents with twins? Or do you have suggestions of jobs I or my wife can do out of our home to supplement our income?

Lamont-Deangelo Ferebee  
Via e-mail

*Editor's note: First of all, I suggest you locate your nearest Twins Club and contact the membership chair. (Go to www.TwinsMagazine.com and click on “Twins Club Listings” to find your nearest group.) It'll be your best support network of all, and many other parents of multiples will have ideas for you of home-businesses, and ways to stretch your dollars. Also, I invite you to register for our TWINS Message Board online (also at www.TwinsMagazine.com) where moms and dads of twins and triplets worldwide share lots of information that might be of use to you. There are three or four different Forums within the TMMB just waiting for your participation.*

### Ganz twins set the record straight

It was a pleasure speaking with you about the story that ran in TWINS™ mentioning that people got no response when they wrote to us (Sept./Oct., 2006). We want your readers to know that Twinstalent and Twinsworld, our world of twins and multiples, is still very active, doing well and always working on behalf of twins and multiples worldwide.

We were upset to hear that some parents of twins thought we were no longer around. There must have been a computer glitch because our contact info has never changed. We have met well over 150,000 multiples worldwide to date and continue to be the ambassadors of the world of twins.

We promote and provide services dedicated to education and

## mail box

enrichment of twins and their families worldwide. We cast twins and multiples for film, print and commercials. We host annual benefits for our non-profit organization, T.W.I.N.S., which raises money to directly help families in need with sick children. We host our annual New York City-area Twins Day at Coney Island, attended by 1,000 families of multiples.

Lisa and Debbie Ganz (Twinsworld1@aol.com)  
WWW.TWINSWORLD.COM or WWW.TWINSTALENT.TV  
New York, NY  
Via e-mail

### Speech disability has Alex's mom very worried

Some days I worry so much about my disabled twin son, Alex, that I can't even sleep. Today is one of those days. I am so afraid he will be hurt by other children when he is in school. Will they see him as the same as them? He never asked to have a learning disability. It was never his fault.

He is a beautiful little boy who wants the most out of life. He is just like any other child, except that he cannot express himself as freely as other children his age. He tries so hard. He tries to talk to me as his mom and many times I am ashamed that I do not understand what he is saying to me.

How will Alex get by as a child with a disability? What if his twin brother succeeds and he is left behind? How can he deal with that? How can I, as his mother, comfort this child who is dealing with a serious speech problem?

My sons are priceless to me, but how can I deal with one who

has special needs on the same level that I deal with one who is advanced?

Alex is the most precious soul you would ever meet. He has a heart of gold. How did he become afflicted with this disability? When I was pregnant with the twins, I know he didn't receive enough cord blood. Is that the reason for his problems?

He is my baby. I always question whether I am to blame for Alex's problems. My heart breaks to see the differences between Alex and his brother. I think I need some guidance.

Christine Flemming, Cancer Registry Coordinator  
Bon Secours St. Francis Medical Center  
Richmond, Va.  
Via e-mail

*Editor's note: I've already assigned a story on this subject, and it's scheduled to run in the March/April, 2007, issue! Stick around.*

### Great tip: Settling down for the night

Having 2-year-old twins brings on a completely different set of issues when it comes to bedtime. Although the two refuse to have separate rooms, they also refuse to go to sleep and calm down by bedtime. In order to speed the process along, I made a slideshow for them of all the people in our family and fun events that we have been to. I saved it all to a CD, and I play lullabies in the background. Wham! It worked! A relaxing and fun way to settle down.

Carrie Kemether  
Elkton, Maryland  
Via e-mail

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## Two sets of twins within one year: Wow!

My wife and I currently have a set of 9-month-old twin boys. And my wife is 28 weeks pregnant with our second set of twin boys in a year. All natural. Her dad is a twin and we are in our 20s. I think ours is a very rare story.

By the way any, links we could use to obtain free Pampers or Enfamil (w/Lipil) would be greatly appreciated.

Thomas L. Brooks

Via e-mail

*Editor's note: Congratulations, Tom! Good luck to you, your wife and your babies...hope all goes well. We don't provide links or resources any more for places where you might obtain freebies—their requirements and contact info was always changing and we had a difficult time keeping up with the constant revisions, then our readers would be irritated at having been given the wrong information. But I know you can get this information from a lot of local twins clubs. Other moms of twins are your best resources for this info. Also, log onto our TWINS Message Board at <http://www.twinsmagazine.com/vbulletin/> and go to the Pregnancy and First Year Forums for a boatload of information!*

## Chromosome disorder: Mom wants contacts

I am a mother of boy/girl twins 7 months old. My girl twin has a rare genetic condition called Tetrasomy 18p. If there are any other moms with twins who have this condition I would be interested in corresponding with them. Thanks! I love your e-newsletter!

Karen Palmer

KPalmer@ReedSmith.com

Via e-mail

## More on SIDS affecting twins

Re the letter in the July/Aug., 2006, Mailbox, "Quit scaring me with SIDS reminders!": While this mom's feelings are very understandable—and I for one remember what it was like to be terrified of SIDS, for my surviving twin, of sudden loss—it's important to note that 'Back to Sleep' also involves more than the babies sleeping on their backs when they are tiny. The NICHD recommendations given in the excellent article by Alice Check in your May/June, 2005, issue included a number of other guidelines, including not having soft objects in the crib.

As best we could find out, there are about 135 families in the U.S. each year who lose an infant twin to SIDS, out of the many tens of thousands of families who give birth to them.

So if it helps, people can remember that the overwhelming reality is that it won't happen to them, but at the same time people need to do everything they can to prevent SIDS, especially if their babies were premature or there are other known risk factors.

As you pointed out, there are always more families coming along having twins and we appreciate your feeling responsible to make sure that they are aware of this.

Also, the article on determining twin zygosity by Gary Steinman MD, PhD, was very interesting and will be very helpful here. It would also be interesting if he were ever to discuss the increased rate of "identicals" (monozygotics) after treatment with fertility technology,

both IVF and drugs alone...apparently about triple the rate even though no one knows why MZ twinning occurs in the first place. Many expectant parents, and quite a few doctors, assume that if twinning occurred after ART, they "must" be fraternal or probably are—hence, many may not be aware of the additional risks of TTTS and other MZ complications.

Jean Kollantai

Center for Loss in Multiple Birth

[www.climb-support.org](http://www.climb-support.org)

Via e-mail

## Flying high with twins

When I read the recent letter from Kari Schutte regarding flying with twins (Sept./Oct., 2006, Mailbox) I had to write. My husband and I have taken our identical twin boys, Benjamin and Nathaniel (now 18 months) on several different airlines since they were 6 months old. We also wanted to save money by having them sit on our laps.

We found Kari's experience to be true on all flights except our first. (It probably just wasn't caught by the flight attendants.) Almost all planes are equipped with only one extra oxygen mask per set of seats. We have been told that when we book flights we should always get aisle seats in the same row. We are still next to each other and don't have to climb over anyone for a diaper change.

When flying with children who aren't potty-trained, always find out if the plane has diaper-changing facilities or not. Unfortunately, not all planes are equipped to be "diaper-friendly." Having to change my son's soaked-through-his-clothes diaper on the galley floor during turbulence—with the flight attendant asking me to return to my seat—was a challenge!

Sandy Waninger

Bloomington, Ind.

Via e-mail

## Fun facts for an expectant mom of twins

Sorry to bug you. I am hosting a shower for my friend who is having twins. Where can I find out approximately how many diapers she will go through in the first year with twins, as well as the number of wipes, amount of formula, etc.? I just want some fun facts. Do you have any suggestions for fun twin games for the shower?

Linda Benninghoff

Via e-mail

*Editor's note: Good questions, Linda. Parents of twins can look forward to diapering their twins as many as 9,000 to 10,000 times during the first year, figuring 12 to 15 diapers per day for the twin infants combined. The highest number we've heard is 12,000 diapers in the first year for a family with twins.*

*If twins require 9,000 to 10,000 diaper changes during the first year, they probably use 2 to 3 times that many wipes.*

*Moms of twins use many different combinations of feeding methods for their babies. Some breastfeed (solely), some use both breastmilk and formula (breastfeeding + bottle), and still others use formula (bottlefeeding) from the start. Many twins are born prematurely, so their consumption is different from that of twins who are "term" babies. Hence, it's difficult*



to estimate the amount of formula twins consume in their first year.

Because of the huge quantity of diapers parents of twins have to dispose of, we have recently endorsed and begun selling through TWINS™ Magazine the Diaper Dekor-Plus DiaperDisposal System, which has a huge capacity and can be used one-handed. It's economically priced and solves several major complaints about typical diaper bucket disposal systems—that they are too small to work for families with twins, and take two hands to open-and-stuff. The Dekor system would be a great shower present for your friend. Cost is \$39.95, and a big pack of refill bags costs \$21.95. To order, call TWINS Customer Service 1-888-55-TWINS (558-9467) or go to [www.TwinsMagazine.com](http://www.TwinsMagazine.com) and you'll find this item on our Home Page.

**My wish came true!**

Back in 1993, I gave birth to fraternal boy/girl twins, now 12. I couldn't ask for better kids. As they grew older and I watched them mature into young adults, I started missing the way they were when they were babies. Believe it or not, before I gave birth to them I had two older sons, so the twins seemed much easier to care for as babies than my older kids were.

Most of all, I missed the "toddler" age—their little grins and giggles, the way they depended on each other for guidance and support, and how absolutely adorable they were then (and still are). Before I knew it, I was telling family and friends I would do anything to have them be babies again.

I remarried when my twins were 10 and was blessed with another child. When that baby was 2 months, in 2005, we moved into a big-

ger house because we now had five children. We had just moved and my youngest was only 2 months old, and I still remember the look on my husband's face when I told him I took a home pregnancy test that came back positive! Another baby was on the way, and still we were thrilled!



My husband didn't come into the room with me for my first ultrasound—I felt something wasn't right and asked him to wait outside. I was sick all the time, and very crampy. If for some reason this baby I was carrying was not doing well, I did not want him to see it on ultrasound. As I lay on the table, the technician applied gel and proceeded with the test. I took one look at the screen in amazement, and the technician smiled and asked, "How many bedrooms did you say your new house has?"

The screen made it quite clear: Another set of twins! I smiled and said, "We're gonna need a bigger house." This was the first thing I told my husband after I left the exam room.

So here I am with seven children. My oldest is son is 21, next son is 15, then the b/g twins, 12, and my little son, 18 months. Dec. 30, 2005, I delivered another set of fraternal boy/girl twins, now 9 months. No fertility drugs. I'm just "lucky" I guess. (Smile!)

As I think back on my earlier wish—"I'd give anything for my

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first set of twins to be babies again”—I can only close by saying, be careful what you wish for.

Rita Webster-Tuinstra, proud mother of double-doubles  
Madison, Wisc.

Via e-mail



### Beautiful boys from Haiti

I absolutely love your magazine and have been reading it since we adopted our twin sons, Kyle and Owen, in January, 2005. They were 8 months old when we brought them home and your magazine really helped me a lot! I now look

forward to finding the new issues of TWINS in my mailbox when they arrive, and I read every one cover to cover.

I hope you'll consider doing more articles on adoption of twins. We adopted our sons from an orphanage in Haiti. There are so many absolutely fascinating aspects of adopting twins and so many people are curious, and interested, and shocked, and fascinated by our adoption. It would make a great article of interest to many people. And our boys would make the perfect cover photo (they're 2 years old now and absolutely adorable—see attached photo). Thanks for your great magazine!

Heather Johnson  
Bethlehem, Penn.

Via e-mail

*Editor's note: Very sneaky, Heather! We receive a lot of letters from proud parents who want their beautiful kiddos to grace our cover and we can't possibly accommodate everyone. But, we can recommend you order a couple of our Custom Covers for your boys...perfect keepsakes and a great way to "get them onto the cover" of TWINS! Go to <http://www.twinsmagazine.com/ss04001.html>*

### Warning: Room for only one in there!

I feel very lucky to have twins. My husband and I always hoped we would have multiples. However, before becoming pregnant with twins, I was pregnant with a singleton that had to be surgically terminated at 14 weeks.

I found out after becoming pregnant that I have a uterine anomaly—a bicornuate uterus. The fetus was developing in the rudimentary part of the horn.

Since I was healthy and had normal gynecological visits, my doctor's office typically didn't schedule ultrasounds until week 16. However, since my maternal grandmother had twins who died within days of their births, and my husband's father was an only surviving triplet, my ultrasound was at week 12. This saved my life.

Upon terminating the pregnancy, I underwent surgery on my uterus, which is now a unicornuate uterus. I was told I could try getting pregnant again in six months, and there wouldn't be any problems maintaining the pregnancy.

But having a unicornuate uterus is like having half a uterus. Shortly after our waiting period, we became pregnant—with twins!

This caused immediate concern—doctors advised I had just enough room for one, and two would cause complications. Doctors warned me I was “at risk for preterm labor” because of my uterine anomaly. One doctor even discussed partial abortion with us.

After months of ultrasounds, doctor visits and tests, I finally reached the point where I was “out of the woods.” Doctors were pleased with my progress and I made it to week 32. I was able to bring Juliana and Gabriella home together after five weeks in the NICU. They are now 8 months old and developing beautifully.

Victoria Bruno

Via e-mail

### Very impressive service!

I was contacted via email by Richard Rhinehart (TWINS' Circulation Manager) regarding my address, because the USPS apparently thinks it an incorrect address. He wanted to update my current address. He told me he would be glad to send out any back issues I had missed, providing there were still extra copies available. I told him I could not have missed more than the last two issues. He said he would send them out to me. Well, lo and behold! That was Monday afternoon and here it is Friday morning and I have all my missing copies of TWINS in today's mail. This is an excellent example of an employee who does not procrastinate and gets the job done. I am very impressed with the professionalism and great customer service of this magazine. I will make sure every one of my friends and family knows what a great company you are.

This may seem a little extreme to you, but here in Hawaii, when someone says they will “drop it in the mail,” the item often takes a week or more to arrive. The TWINS package was here in only days, by 1st class. Please commend Mr. Rhinehart for keeping a customer happy and loyal. Aloha.

Jodie Cole

Honolulu, Hi.

Via e-mail

*Editor's note: Thanks, Jodie, for taking time to write. Our Customer Service Rep, Sonya Craney, and Circulation Manager, Rick Rhinehart, receive a lot of “Atta boy!” praise, for always going the extra mile.*

### Perfect timing!

We just received our Nov./Dec. issue of TWINS™. Thanks for the article on preschools. That is exactly what we are working on now—visiting preschools to find a good fit for next fall. I don't know if it's like this all over, but in our area, classes fill up nearly a year in advance, so you basically have to decide that far ahead what you think will be a good fit for your kids a year later. Pretty tough to do. Anyhow, I enjoyed the article and am going to pass it along to a neighbor, who is trying to make the same preschool decision for her daughter.

Wendy Bernstein

Deerfield, Ill.

Via e-mail

*(Wendy, a freelance writer and mom of identical twin boys, is having a third baby in February.)*

# Busting the Myths: RED DYE AND HYPERACTIVITY

by Steven Sainsbury, M.D.

**A** TWINS™ reader wrote in to express her disappointment that my recent myth-busting article on sugar and hyperactivity in children did not include mention of additives such as Red Dye #3 (Mailbox, Nov./Dec., 2006). Many parents believe food dyes and other additives have a definite role in worsening the symptoms of Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

This premise began in the 1970s, when Dr. Benjamin Feingold, a pediatric allergist from California, suggested there was a definite link between certain food additives and ADHD. The Feingold diet, void of such substances as Red Dye #3, was supposed to cure (or at least greatly decrease) hyperactive behavior.

Yet, subsequent research into Dr. Feingold's contentions have been mixed. In 1982, the National Institutes of Health, over the objections of many parents, concluded there was no evidence to support Dr. Feingold's claims. Nonetheless, some recent studies have suggested that reducing food additives may benefit a small subset of ADHD children.

For example, in one well-designed study, researchers fed one group of ADHD-children foods without additives that looked, tasted and smelled exactly like the additive-rich foods given to a second group of ADHD-children. For the vast majority of subjects, when evaluated by impartial observers, there was no difference.

But—and this is important—for about 1 in every 100 ADHD-children, the removal of additives showed a significant decrease in hyperactive behavior. This susceptibility appears to be genetically linked and quite real. Furthermore, Red Dye #3 appears to be a major culprit for this small group of ADHD kids.

The dye is used in a variety of foods such as soft drinks, candy,

desserts, processed cheese, and many other foods.

If you suspect your child might be one of the susceptible ones, why not try your own safe and well-controlled experiment? Periodically mix a food containing red dye (like red Jell-O) into a strong-tasting red food like spaghetti or pizza sauce. Try to mix the dye in without changing how the food looks or tastes. Then have your spouse or some other observer, without telling them when you have added the dye, observe your child.

Better yet, take a video of your child's behavior after ingestions

of both dye-added and dye-free foods. Show the videos to another observer to evaluate. If their observations confirm that increased ADHD behavior occurs when the dye is added, you have your answer.

Regardless of whether your child is susceptible to Red Dye #3 and other food additives or not, it still makes good nutritional sense to reduce your child's use of foods that contain the dye—they tend to be sugary, highly-processed foods containing empty calories and providing minimal nutrition. The extra attention you show towards your children's diets can only reap a host of benefits.

One final piece of advice: Try to relax about this issue. I have seen some parents become so obsessed with their children's diets that they end up causing the very behaviors they are trying to avoid. An occasional carrot (or in this case, a helping of red Jell-O) will engender a desired behavior much better than wielding a heavy stick of guilt and blame. ♡

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...for [only] about 1 in every 100  
ADHD-children, the removal of  
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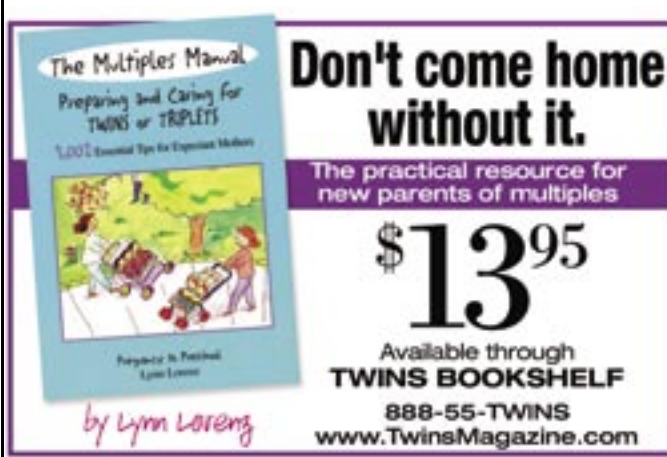
Steven Sainsbury, an emergency room doctor who lives in San Luis Obispo, Calif., is the father of eight in a blended family, including three surviving quads, 21. He's been writing medical articles for TWINS since 1986, and has worked as an emergency physician since 1985.



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by Lynn Loreng

# Wondering about DHA supplements

**Q** I am writing to ask a question about the article you wrote for TWINS™ Magazine about DHA supplements. I was looking at the DHA supplement that Enfamil offers, which you recommended as a good one: the Expecta Lipil you recommend for your pregnant and breastfeeding patients. I had identical twin girls in December, 2005, and have a 3½-year-old son.

My husband just had a physical and found out his cholesterol is quite high. I noticed in the article that DHA is good at reducing bad cholesterol and boosting good cholesterol. Is Expecta Lipil a product my husband and I can take just for general health? I have also stopped breastfeeding recently. Heart disease runs in my family. My father is on cholesterol-reducing medications, has four stents and a pacemaker. So heart health is definitely a concern for me as well.

If you do recommend Expecta Lipil for both my husband and myself, what dosage is the best for us? Also, the girls are using Enfamil Lipil formula so they are getting it now. Is this something that is good for kids to take as well? Is this a supplement that we can give to my son and daughters, once the girls are drinking cow's milk? What form of DHA supplement would they take if this is not the right one?

—Chrissie Rouse

**A** **Dr. Rachel responds:**  
We live in exciting times when we begin thinking about preventing disease rather than simply treating it!

In the past hundred years or so, we became more technologically advanced as a society and strayed from the eating habits of our ancestors. We no longer hunt for our

food or work to raise meat; nor do we any longer forage for or harvest grains, fruits and vegetables. We rely less on Nature's bounty and more on foods created in laboratories with long shelf lives and short cooking times. We have become a "fast food nation," where the dominant vegetable source is the French fry. We expend very little physical effort to obtain food. Hence, we've created obesity, diabetes and heart disease epidemics. Our diet has also become deficient in an essential group of fats—omega-3 fatty acids—that we've learned play a key role in maintaining health.

Omega-3 fatty acids are DHA, ALA and EPA. DHA (the fatty acid from algae found in Expecta Lipil) comes from cold-water sea fish such as salmon, tuna, and shrimp. It is also present in small amounts in chicken and eggs. EPA also is found in sea fish. ALA can be found in nuts and flaxseed. The most important Omega-3s are DHA and EPA, which are documented to be heart- and brain-healthy fats.

Most health professionals recommend adults get at least 220 mg daily of DHA, with 300 mg or more for pregnant and breastfeeding women. See the table below to see how much DHA you could get from your food:

Food (one serving)	DHA (mg)
Salmon filet	638
White tuna (canned)	535
Smoked salmon	227
Jumbo shrimp	96
Fried chicken	37
Hard-boiled egg	19

Ingesting more than 3000 mg per day from food or 2000 mg per day from a supplement is not recommended.

DHA has been proven to support brain development from fetal life through early childhood, and for this reason medical experts have recommended DHA supplementation for women of childbearing age and for infants and children under 2 years old. I hesitate to officially recommend giving children DHA supplements after they are weaned—the long-term effects of giving children the supplement for life are unknown. There is not yet a recommended daily allowance for children.

DHA has been shown to prevent high blood pressure in children, and there is evidence it can help prevent or manage attention deficit disorder (ADD) and other problems. Studies are ongoing and are looking at doses of 80-200 mg for a healthy child. Some mother-child nutrition programs give specific recommendations for each age group (for more information see <http://www.brainfood.uconn.edu/recommend.htm>).

Whether or not you and your husband should take DHA is a much easier question to answer. The answer is a resounding "yes!" You should each get at least 220 mg per day of DHA to help lower your bad cholesterol, raise your good cholesterol and prevent heart disease. Higher doses have been shown to have further benefits, and there is a version of Omega-3 available only by prescription (Omacor) that has been approved by the FDA for lowering a type of bad cholesterol called triglycerides.

Try first to get DHA from the food you eat. But be cautious about the source of the fish you eat—farm-raised fish may have as much as 50% less DHA, but ocean fish caught in the wild may contain more mercury. (Any mercury we ingest is absorbed into our tissues and stays there forever, or

until we give up some of it to support the growth of a developing fetus, thereby poisoning the new baby's brain.) Mercury poisoning can result in birth defects including developmental delay, lower IQ scores and behavioral problems in children. For this reason, the FDA recommends that women of childbearing age eat ocean fish no more than once a month—which would make getting enough DHA very difficult, indeed.

I recommend one pill of Expecta Lipil per day for women of childbearing age because we worry also about the possibility of mercury contamination in over-the-counter fish oil supplements. Men and women who are not going to become pregnant should eat fish at least twice a week, or take a fish oil supplement. You could continue to take Expecta Lipil, but it is more expensive than other fish oil pills, and does not contain EPA.

I do not currently give my 5-year-olds

a fish oil supplement, but I do serve them salmon once or twice a month, and I'm thinking about giving them a supplement as well. My husband and I don't anticipate having any more children, so I switched recently to a fish oil supplement that contains 240 mg of DHA and 360 mg of EPA per two pills (I take two pills once daily). My mother has had two stents inserted and I have high blood pressure, so I understand your concerns.

To summarize, my overall heart-healthy advice to you is this:

- Keep your portion sizes and balance of food groups healthy. Make sure 2/3 of your plate consists of fruits and/or veggies, and focus on heart-healthy sources of fat like fish, nuts and monounsaturated oils (safflower, flaxseed, olive) in small quantities.
- Make sure you get at least 30 minutes of heart-pounding exercise at least five

days a week.

- Maintain a healthy weight.
- If you smoke, stop now—ask your doctor for help if you can't quit.
- Work hard to control your stress.
- If you're not getting enough Omega-3 fatty acids, start taking a supplement. ♥

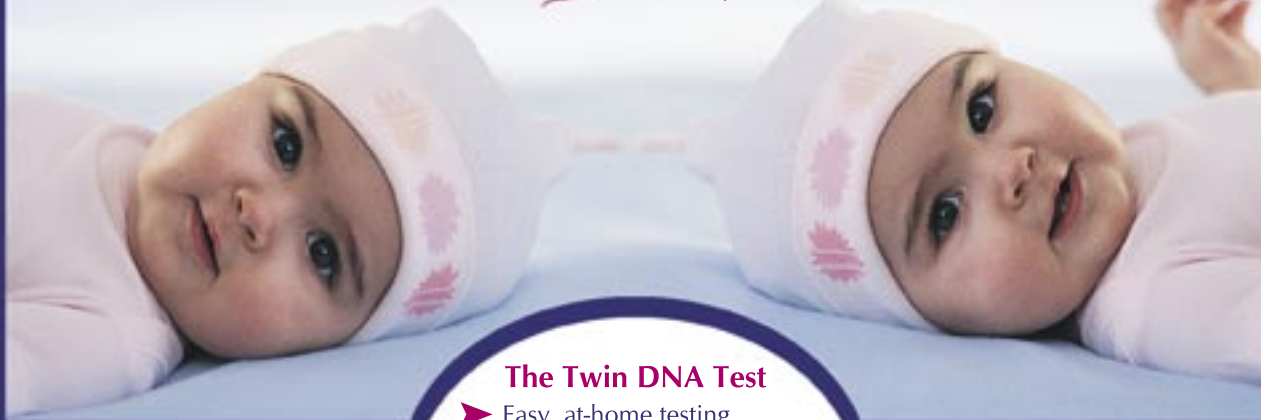
Rachel Franklin, a board-certified family medicine physician in Oklahoma City, is the mother of 4-year-old b/g twins and the author of *Expecting Twins, Triplets and More: A Doctor's Guide to a Healthy and Happy Multiple Pregnancy* (St. Martin's Griffin 2005), available at [www.TwinsMagazine.com](http://www.TwinsMagazine.com).



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# 5 KEYS to avoiding premature twins

By Wendy Bernstein

“If only I had known!”

“No one ever told me what I had to do!”

These wails of hopelessness come from far too many moms of preemie twins whose babies died, spent months in the NICU, or became saddled for life with physical and mental disabilities, all resulting from being born too soon, and too small.

Go to any twins club meeting and the most common topic of conversation before and after the meeting, around the dinner table or while snacking on appetizers centers on birth experiences. And those stories largely focus on preterm labor, premature births, months of visiting the NICU, and the survival—or deaths—of tiny babies born before their time.

Everyone's personal story is accompanied by hand-wringing among new members of the clubs currently pregnant with twins and triplets, and waiting to deliver. They display fear for their own babies, wondering when they, too, will feel the contractions of pre-term labor or have to resort to full-time bedrest in hope of keeping their babies inside a bit longer.

There are proven ways to help ensure that twin and triplet babies will develop in utero longer, and prevent pre-term labor, gestational diabetes, preeclampsia, and premature births. Preventive solutions that have proven success.

The questions now are: Why don't more obstetricians know what to do? And why don't they tell their pregnant patients what guidelines to follow? And why aren't more expectant moms-of-multiples following these simple steps so they're more likely to have healthy, full-term babies? And why is the premature birth rate remaining so high among women having multiples?

## High risks needn't be so high

All the “nightmares of pregnancy”—pre-term labor, premature births, eclampsia, preeclampsia, hypertension, gestational diabetes—occur much more frequently among women expecting twins and triplets than in women expecting single babies. Then there's twin-to-twin-transfusion syndrome (TTTS) and numerous other conditions that push multiples pregnancies into the category of high-risk.

Couple those statistics with the increased rate of twin / triplet pregnancies and births since 1980, and you see a problem of staggering proportions and expense.

Add the element of widespread obstetrician ignorance about proper nutrition and weight gain in pregnant women having multiples, and the problem assumes gigantic proportions. Very few physicians, as near as anyone can determine, educate women having twins or triplets about the necessity of high-calorie intake and fast weight gain early in their multiples pregnancies.

Now here's the real shock: Many, if not most, premature births of multiples—and low birth weights of twins and triplets—are preventable. If only women knew!

There are proven ways to help ensure that twin and triplet babies will develop in utero longer, and prevent pre-term labor, gestational diabetes, preeclampsia, and premature births—eat right and gain enough weight early-on!

A mother-to-be of multiples can do much more to help her babies grow as big and healthy as possible in her womb. The secret is simple: proper nutrition and adequate weight gain, according to Barbara Luke, ScD, MPH, RD, professor of obstetrics/gynecology, epidemiology and public health at the School of Medicine, University of Miami, Fla., and author of *When You're Expecting Twins, Triplets or Quads*.

## Are OBs too often in the dark?

From the moment I learned I was having twins, I began hearing how common it is for multiples to be born early and at higher risk of having to spend time in the neonatal intensive care unit. Happily, my identical twin boys were born full-term at 37½ weeks, at healthy birth weights. They were able to come home with me immediately.

Aside from more frequent obstetrician visits, taking an earlier leave of absence from work, and a little more folic acid in my diet,



**When You're Expecting Twins, Triplets, or Quads** (\$19.95, Harper Collins, 1999, 2004) by Barbara Luke, ScD, MPH, RD, and mom-of-twins Tamara Eberlein,

explains Dr. Luke's proven nutrition-based program to reduce complications, ensure healthier moms & healthier babies. Revised edition includes 50 recipes to maximize multiples' birthweights, as well as vegetarian options. Available from TWINS™ Bookshelf (see page 47) or online at [http://www.twinsmagazine.com/when\\_expecting\\_twins\\_triplets\\_quads.html](http://www.twinsmagazine.com/when_expecting_twins_triplets_quads.html)

I basically followed the same guidelines as those for someone having a singleton, unaware I could do even more to give my boys the best start possible.

Eating right for moms having twins-or-more is the secret to gaining the right amount of weight, at the right times, Dr. Luke has learned through her groundbreaking research.

“I tell moms-to-be that pregnancy has a lot in common with gardening,” says Dr. Luke. “You can’t just throw seeds into soil, neglect to feed or water them, and still expect blue-ribbon roses. You have to nurture and nourish your potential show-stoppers. So it’s only logical that nutrition would play an important role in pregnancy,” especially with two babies competing for nutrition in utero.

For more than 30 years, Dr. Luke has counseled thousands of pregnant women and has helped generations of children begin their lives healthy and strong. Her program, begun at the University of Michigan’s Multiples Clinic, combines the triple components of nutritional guidelines, education and risk-screening to help women have healthier babies and reduce potential complications during a multiples pregnancy.

Patients who have followed Dr. Luke’s regimen have experienced significantly less trouble with high blood pressure and pre-

Ideal weight gain patterns during pregnancy				
TYPE OF PREGNANCY	WEIGHT GAIN BY 20 WEEKS	WEIGHT GAIN BY 28 WEEKS	TOTAL WEIGHT GAIN	AVE. LENGTH OF GESTATION
Singleton	12 lbs	20 lbs	25-35 lbs	40 weeks
<b>Twins</b>	<b>25 lbs</b>	<b>38 lbs</b>	<b>40-56 lbs</b>	<b>36 weeks</b>
Triplets	35 lbs	54 lbs	58-75 lbs	32 weeks
Quadruplets	45 lbs	65 lbs	70-80 lbs	30 weeks

*Source: When You’re Expecting Twins, Triplets, or Quads by Barbara Luke, ScD, MPH, RD & Tamara Eberlein (Harper Collins, ©1999, 2004)*

eclampsia during pregnancy, both of which affect mothers pregnant with multiples much more often than during singleton pregnancies. They’ve lowered their risk of gestational diabetes, experienced fewer infections during pregnancy, and had a lower incidence of preterm premature rupture of the membrane (PROM), which occurs when the sac(s) containing the developing baby (babies) and the amniotic fluid bursts or develops a hole prior to the start of labor.

Last, but far from least, Dr. Luke’s patients also are admitted to the hospital much less frequently for preterm labor, and they spend fewer days in the hospital if they are admitted for preterm labor.

Sound too good to be true? It’s not! All of these findings are carefully documented and

are highly credible. Dr. Luke is, above all, a scientist and she’s as concerned as anyone that her suggested regimen be authoritative, based on sound research.

On average, participants in Dr. Luke’s program delivered twins weighing 20% more than other twins delivered at the same gestational age of moms who weren’t in Dr. Luke’s program. Triplets were born weighing 35% more at birth, on average, than triplets typically do. At age 3, multiples born to mothers in Dr. Luke’s program had experienced better growth overall, had fewer hospitalizations and were significantly less likely to experience delays in mental and motor development.

“Having access to nutrition counseling offered by the Multiples Clinic was a real advantage,” says Helen Armer, mother of triplets. “My babies were all a good size when they were born—one weighed almost 6 pounds, and the other two were close to 5 pounds each. I don’t think that would have happened without Dr. Luke’s nutrition program.”

### So what’s the answer? Early weight gain

Twins are typically born at 35 to 36 weeks’ gestation; triplets, on average, at 32 weeks; quadruplets at 30 weeks. All arrive frighteningly early, on average. By comparison, a singleton pregnancy is considered “term” at 39 weeks.

Shorter gestation periods mean mothers-to-be of multiples need to gain weight earlier and quicker than women carrying singletons in order to prevent preeclampsia and other disorders that can endanger the

Comparison of Outcomes of Multiple Births, U.S. 1995-2000				
	Single	Twins	Triplets	Quads
N	22,991,306	316,696	12,193	778
Average birth weight, in grams	3,351	2,376	1,706	1,320
Under 1,500 grams (%)	1.1	9.8	32.7	61.5
Under 2,500 grams (%)	6.0	53.1	92.1	98.6
Average gestation, in weeks	39.0	35.5	32.0	30.1
Equal to or over 30 weeks (%)	1.2	8.9	27.5	49.4
Equal to or over 36 weeks (%)	10.0	55.3	92.8	97.3
Equal to or over 37 weeks (%)	90.0	44.7	7.2	2.7
Diagnosed with preeclampsia (%)	3.5	7.8	11.1	11.6
Diagnosed with eclampsia (%)	0.3	0.9	1.8	1.8
Infant death (%)	0.6	2.4	6.1	8.0

Source: U.S. Census, Bureau of National Statistics

mom's life or those of her babies.

"The pattern and rate of weight gain are more important than total weight gain," says Dr. Luke. "I used to talk about how important it is to gain 24 pounds in the first 24 weeks. But now research has clearly shown that there is a correct amount of weight to be gained each week, during each of the three periods of multiples gestation."

During the first 28 weeks of a twin pregnancy, it's important that an expectant mom having twins or triplets build her body's fat stores and other nutrients, in order to provide a reserve to help the babies' grow during the final third of the pregnancy, Dr. Luke's research has clearly shown. Later in pregnancy with multiples, it's harder for mom to eat enough (i.e., take in enough calories each day) to keep up with the babies' nutritional demands. That's why she needs to have an adequate reserve built up within the first 28 weeks.

This need is greatly magnified for women expecting three or more babies, Dr. Luke says. With triplets and quadruplets, weight gain before 24 weeks has the greatest effect on the babies' growth overall.

A study of 2,324 twin pregnancies showed that for optimal fetal growth and birth weight, a woman's optimal weight gain should follow guidelines for three distinct periods—zero to 20 weeks, 20 to 28 weeks, and 28 weeks to delivery. How much a specific individual should gain during each week of her pregnancy can be determined by knowing the woman's pre-pregnancy body mass index (BMI), which is a balance between the body's proportions of muscle and fat, and using a chart from Dr. Luke's book.

### GOAL: Gain 1 pound+ per wk

Dr. Luke's research shows that women of normal weight (BMI between 19.8 and 26) have the "best outcomes"—the longest pregnancies, healthiest pregnancies, and healthiest twin infants—if they gain 1–1¼ pounds per week during the first 20 weeks, and 1¼–1½ pounds each week for the next seven weeks. In the 29th week and thereafter, weight gain ideally should be at one pound a week until the babies are delivered.

## IMMEDIATE STEPS to take when you learn you're having twins / triplets...

- 1 Get your hands on Barbara Luke's book, *When You're Expecting Twins, Triplets or Quads*
- 2 Read it, right away, and copy her guidelines for caloric intake and early weight gain during your pregnancy
- 3 Start eating for three people, right away...at least 3,000 calories a day, 6 meals a day, including hefty, healthy snacks
- 4 Focus on protein, healthy carbs (whole grains, legumes), dairy products, fresh fruits and veg
- 5 Focus on protein, healthy carbs (whole grains, legumes), dairy products, fresh fruits and vegetables
- 6 Get your mind off yourself and onto helping your babies get The Right Start by being born at full-term and at healthy birth weights
- 7 Take daily DHA supplements to help ensure proper neurological and physical development of your babies in utero

Women who are underweight before becoming pregnant with twins (BMI under 19.8) are more likely to do better if they gain even more weight each week for the first 20 weeks—1¼ to 1½ pounds—and continue gaining that much during the seven weeks after that—1¼ to 1½ pounds a week.

Women who are overweight before becoming pregnant with twins (BMI of 26.1-29) should count on gaining 1 to 1¼ pounds a week for the first 20 weeks, and 1 to 1¼ pounds a week thereafter.

### Eating around the clock

A mom who consumes enough calories to support her multiples pregnancy needs to eat every two to three hours, or maybe even more often, from the moment she learns she is having twins-or-more. She can accomplish six meals a day by eating a hearty breakfast, a mid-morning snack, lunch, a mid-afternoon snack, dinner and a bedtime snack.

Snacks have to be substantial, says Dr. Luke—whole grain cereal and milk with bananas, or a grilled cheese sandwich, for example. Not three celery sticks, or 10 peanuts, or one slice of cheese.

This regimen often requires complete re-training for many women, who often shun breakfast because they're in a hurry

and who shun snacks in an effort to avoid gaining weight. All of that thinking has to be thrown out. Women who learn they're having twins should think in terms of consuming a whopping 3,000 to 5,000 calories a day from the moment they learn they're having twins.

"I knew I couldn't rely on hunger pangs to tell me when to sit down to a meal or snack. When you're supposed to eat every two hours, you never get much chance to feel hungry. Instead, I just watched the clock," says Helen Amer. "I was very disciplined about doing exactly what the Multiples Clinic staff had told me to do, so I never, ever missed a meal or snack."

Dr. Luke recommends a daily caloric intake of 40% carbohydrates, 40% fat and 20% protein, with an emphasis on animal protein for non-vegetarians. She also recommends increased calcium, iron and other tissue-building nutrients. And she wants expectant moms to drink at least eight 16-oz. glasses of water a day.

### Huge advantages: Luke's proof

A University of Michigan study (1996 to 2002) that followed 190 twin pregnancies in Dr. Luke's program and 339 twin pregnancies not in her program supported



the positive effects of Dr. Luke's prenatal nutrition and education guidelines. The findings:

Preterm premature rupture of membrane (PROM)	Program Patients	Nonprogram Patients
	10%	25%
Delivered before 36 wks	41%	53%
Delivered before 32 wks	7%	21%
Delivered before 30 wks	3%	9%
Experienced preterm labor	23%	42%
Diagnosed with preeclampsia	8%	17%
Babies deliv. @ low birthweights	41%	64%
Babies deliv. @ very low birthweights	5%	16%

Because the number of twin pregnancies has increased enormously during the last 20 years, more doctors nationwide are treating women having multiples. But twin pregnancies account for only a small fraction of all births, so it isn't unusual many doctors fail to recognize unique needs of multiples in utero. Therein lies a big part of the problem with high rates of gestational diabetes, premature labor, preeclampsia, and premature births among women having twins or more.

Meredith Alcott, mother of identical twin girls, used an obstetrician who did not specialize in multiple births. She recalls, "I received the standard care you'd expect during a singleton pregnancy—but what I needed went beyond standard. For instance, my obstetrician gave only perfunctory answers to my questions about diet and other special needs of a twin pregnancy. And he never saw me more than once a month, even after I developed complications."

Since all multiple pregnancies involve increased risk, Dr. Luke recommends every mom who learns she's pregnant with twins-or-more assemble her own well-equipped health care team, which should include a maternal-fetal medicine specialist experienced in high-risk pregnancies, and a registered dietitian who specializes in obstetrics.

## Premature twins: A problem of staggering sorrow and expense

Stop and think about the cost of prematurity among multiples, to say nothing of the lifelong challenges for parents and children with prematurity-related physical disabilities and other disorders.

About 126,500 babies are born in the U.S. each year in sets of two or more, to approximately 63,000 families. Statistics show that 53% of all twins are born prematurely, before 36 weeks, and that 17% of all women pregnant with multiples are diagnosed with preeclampsia during pregnancy.

Even scarier is that 64% of all multiples are born at low birth weights. Babies born prematurely and at low birth weights often spend weeks and months in the NICUs around the nation, and frequently end up being million-dollar babies. Their lives are worth it, make no mistake!

But if it were possible to prevent many, if not most, premature births of twins and triplets alone, the nation—and these burdened families—could potentially save anywhere from an estimated \$5 billion a year in hospital costs at the low end to well over \$25 billion a year. And this is just by avoiding NICU and "immediate medical acute care" expenses for these newborns, to say nothing of lifelong therapy, costs of care, and recurring medical expenses that pile up each year when babies are born very fragile and tiny.

Imagine again the improved quality of life for expectant mothers and babies if, by following proper nutritional guidelines and gaining enough weight early in multiples-pregnancies, women could avoid gestational diabetes, preeclampsia and other very serious medical conditions that are often treated in hospitals and require lengthy hospital stays. Beyond the 53% of all multiples born prematurely, another 11% of all multiples are born at low birth weights, which also results of longer hospital stays, sometimes in the NICU units, and more sickness and medical problems during these babies' early lives.

### Physical, neurological development is critical

The latest study on possible causes of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) points to underdevelopment of a baby's brainstem as the source of the problem, although the actual link between the brainstem and the physiological process that causes a baby to stop breathing isn't known.

Scientists believe that the brainstem malfunction could be the result of such external things as smoking, stress or toxic triggers on fetal development. But it is also possible that an infant is simply underdeveloped neurologically, a condition that might be improved with proper maternal nutrition and a koiwer rate of premature births.

If development of the neurological system in infants could be helped by having the mother gain the proper amount of weight early in her pregnancy, who wouldn't want to pay attention and try to ensure that each baby is born larger and healthier?

The latest SIDS finding from the National Institutes of Health, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, "is significant because it points to a developmental deficit," said Marian Willinger, who directs SIDS research funded by NIH.

Each year, about 2,000 apparently healthy babies die from SIDS, also known as crib death. Typically, a peacefully sleeping infant never awakens.

"You may experience no complications whatsoever. Still, it's smart to be prepared," advises Dr. Luke. "These are your children for life. You get one chance to make healthy kids." ♥

Wendy Bernstein is a freelance writer in Deerfield, Ill., and a mom of ID twin boys, Ryan and Cole, 2½. She's pregnant with a singleton baby who will arrive in February.

# 5 Amazing Ways Breastfeeding Benefits YOU!

By Christine Bradley, CLE

**Breastfeeding your twins offers them amazing health and other benefits. What you probably don't know, however, is that your babies aren't the only ones who benefit from breastfeeding. Here's what's in it for you.**

## **Recover faster after childbirth, lose weight faster**

You probably gained at least 35 to 45 pounds during your pregnancy with twins. If you were underweight before you conceived, or if you were carrying more than two babies, you most likely gained even more than that.

If you're wondering how your uterus will ever bounce back to normal, think "Breastfeeding." If you're fretting about how you'll ever lose all that weight, breastfeed!

Breastfeeding triggers the release of oxytocin, the hormone that contracts the uterus during labor *and* after childbirth to return it to its normal size. When you have both babies latched on at the same time, a giant dose of oxytocin floods your system.

Breastfeeding assists with weight loss after you give birth. Producing breastmilk burns lots of calories. Dieticians usually recommend mothers who are breastfeeding consume 300 to 500 extra calories per day per baby, because of the demands breastfeeding places on your body.

Stimulating both nipples at once by nursing two babies at once induces your body to produce more prolactin, the hormone responsible for maintaining milk supply. The more milk you make, the more

calories you burn. Of course, you need to eat more, but your body's fat stores contribute about one-third of the calories needed to produce breastmilk, too. So you *still* lose weight.

Some studies have indicated that lactating women have smaller hip, thigh, and upper arm circumferences than formula-feeding moms.

## **Enjoy more free time**

You may not believe me, but mothers who breastfeed usually enjoy more free time than mothers who formula-feed. The biggest complaint I get from mothers of multiples is they feel like all they ever do is nurse. Once you get the hang of holding both babies simultaneously, it can take the same time as nursing one baby. In fact, holding two babies at your breasts is actually easier than trying to hold two babies and two bottles. Plus, you avoid spending time warming and mixing formula, cleaning bottles and sterilizing nipples 12 times a day.

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*Numerous studies have shown breastfeeding protects a woman against the most common cancers—breast, ovarian and uterine.*

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## **Save money—breastmilk is free**

Formula for one baby costs between \$1,200 and \$2,000 a year. Multiply that by two (or more) and add the cost of bottles, nipples, sanitizing products, electricity, water for cleaning, extra doctor visits (formula-fed infants are sick much more often) and you're looking at a hefty bill for your twin infants.

Even if you decide to invest in a good breastpump, you're looking at spending about \$300 at most for a pump that'll last years. Many moms of twins rent their breastpump, or buy a used one from another mom of twins whose kids are older.

If you start a college savings fund for your babies with the \$3,000 to \$5,000 you would otherwise spend on formula, imagine how thankful you'll be 18 years from now. Or, if you're more like me, you can spend some of the savings on a much-needed spa retreat followed by a romantic date with your spouse.

## **Celebrate lactational amenorrhea**

This is a fancy name for not having your period. This lovely phenomenon is part of what kept me tandem-nursing my twin daughters well into their toddler years. Nipple stimulation during lactation prevents the release of gonadotropin-releasing hormones, which play a vital role in ovulation. (This may have something to do with why women sometimes become pregnant soon after they stop breastfeeding.)

A few women who breastfeed exclusively experience a rapid return of menstrual cycles after giving birth. But most women who breastfeed will go without their period for at least six months. This often extends to well over a year. Not having to worry about your period while you adjust to life with multiples is very nice.

## **Lower risk of cancer, osteoporosis**

Numerous studies have shown breastfeeding protects a woman against the most common cancers—breast, ovarian and uterine. What's really fascinating is this is thought to be true even in women with genes that predispose them to cancer.

Though nobody is certain why this correlation occurs, experts believe it lowers estrogen levels during lactation. (Estrogen promotes growth of cells in reproductive systems). Less exposure to estrogen throughout a lifetime means less risk of cell growth that becomes cancerous.

Also, women who breastfeed are about four times less likely to develop osteoporosis as they age. The hormone prolactin causes lactating women to absorb significantly greater amounts of calcium in the gut, which is thought to help replenish calcium stores in the bones. ♡

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Christine Bradley is a mom of twins and certified lactation consultant in Sandy, Utah.

# Ready or Not...There We Go!

## *The Real Experts' Guide to the Toddler Years with Twins*

by Elizabeth Lyons (*Finn-Phyllis Press, 260 pgs., Softcover, June 2006*)

Elizabeth Lyons's new book, *Ready or Not...*, is like a personal letter from your best friend. Well, maybe from your best friend who is in the middle of her own personal insanity, trying to cope with the mayhem and mischief that is parenting twin toddlers. But she's a best friend who is supportive, encouraging, knowledgeable, and most importantly, downright hysterical...funny, that is!

Those familiar with her first book, *Ready or Not...Here We Come, The Real Experts' Cannot-Live-Without Guide to the First Year With Twins*, will be pleased to know that all the usual suspects from that adventure are back, offering the wisdom of their combined experience and battle scars. For the rest of you, here's the lowdown: Many suggestions come from a group of twin moms who met in a "Marvelous Multiples" birthing class, became friends, and supported each other through their dicey early years with twins. Like your own personal support group, the "multiples sorority" shares its shortcuts, strategies, and sage advice.

I thank my lucky stars this book was released about the time my twins turned one. Silly me, when I reached the end of the first year—and the end of the first *Ready or Not* book—I thought the hard part was over! Due in large part to the strategies I gleaned from what I had come to refer to in my own head as "The Twin Mom's Bible", we were cruising. We were more or less organized, had a regular schedule, my kids played together well enough that I could actually get some things done, and we were ninety-nine percent self-feeding. This was a piece of cake.

Of course, since these are my first children I have no clue about anything but the here and now. I also had no idea how the difficulty level would increase exponentially once these kids began to walk. I'd heard rumors, though. Much of the conversation on the twins message boards revolve around issues with toddlers. Yikes! Sometimes the horror stories made me want to drop my kids off at a farm somewhere. Thankfully, most of these hair-raising topics appear somewhere in Lyons's book. From climbing out of bed at night, to temper tantrums, to—my personal favorite—removing one's

diaper and using the contents to, shall we say, express one's creativity. And everything in between. It's all covered. This book is jam-packed.

"RONTWG" is sprinkled with amusing quotes and anecdotes, which helps you maintain your sense of humor—without which you are done for. In fact, Lyons maintains that a sense of humor is one of the three essential elements to surviving this period in your mothering life, the other two being a sense of perspective and very low expectations. Taping this list onto your refrigerator or bathroom mirror is not a bad idea.

Humor and Lyons's conversational tone make her book a quick read. It's so clearly laid out you can easily refer back later (when in your insanity, you want to retrieve a morsel of information that might possibly have something to do with your current crisis). The book is divided into Year 2, Year 3, and Year 4, with main issues of concern for each stage referenced on the contents page. Busy moms can find the info they need in a snap. Topics are revisited as necessary during different stages, with age-appropriate suggestions given for each phase of development.

Lyons's advice is quick and to the point, which is good. We don't have time for a lot of theory anyway. She tackles minor concerns as well as the biggies, always keeping in mind that you're dealing with two kids at a time on any given subject.

Particularly helpful are her sections dealing with twin-specific behavior, such as finding a sitter who can handle twins, competition between twins, and bedroom

### **Moms of twins have it easier—they reach out!**

In one way, mothers of twins have it easier than other moms. Many moms feel isolated, figuring things out as they go, often hesitant to admit they need help. For some reason, they think they should have all the answers.

Out of sheer necessity, however, moms of twins have to get over themselves and grow comfortable with asking for help much earlier, and in a hurry. We have no problem calling another twin-mom and saying "I have no idea what to do with these children!"

We have twins, for crying out loud! People are always asking us, "How in the world do you do it?" because they expect us to be overwhelmed. People are, quite frankly, amazed when we are not.

Accepting imperfection can be quite liberating.

—SC

## Tell your tale...

As a mother of twins, you have tales to tell. Want to join in the mayhem?

Elizabeth Lyons is accepting submissions for two books she has in the making. The first, focused on the “stories behind the blessings” will contain essays detailing the journey of pregnancy, delivery, and first year with twins. The second will focus on wisdom and advice for mothers of multiples, including brief tips, tricks, and words of advice (humorous or serious) from one mom of multiples to another. Submit your story to [author@elizabethlyons.com](mailto:author@elizabethlyons.com).

parties (if you aren't familiar with this phenomenon yet, consider yourself lucky).

Lyons's friends—Mollie, Barb, and the others—are still hanging on and going strong. Their stories present alternate viewpoints and options, and added doses of humor. Unlike some other parenting books, all “RONTWG” strategies are real-world. Nothing is more frustrating than reading so-called parenting solutions that are utterly impractical to implement. Also included are thoughts about how to proceed when you've exhausted every available option and nothing works—these usually involve ingesting chocolate of some kind.

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*Both of Elizabeth Lyons's books are available for purchase at the TWINS Bookshelf (see page 47) or online at [http://twinsmagazine.com/there\\_we\\_go.html](http://twinsmagazine.com/there_we_go.html)*

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I was surprised to find a comparatively long section on Marriage, which I started reading eagerly enough, mainly because it began with a very true and very humorous anecdote that was almost worth the price of the book. However, I soon began to wonder if perhaps Lyons had wandered off topic. I

thought, “Okay, why is she still talking about my relationship with my husband? I didn't buy this book for marriage tips. My kids are going to be mobile in about five minutes and I'm going to need some serious help here. I haven't spent this much time in one sitting thinking about my husband since I got pregnant.”

But within minutes I had an “Aha!” moment, and realized precisely why the book needed this section. We become so focused on our kids and their needs that we start to forget about the relationship that started all of this nonsense in the first place. The message is: Treasure your husband.

Make time for your marriage.

It's sound advice, especially considering I'd be a fool to think I can manage these two maniacs by myself.

A most delightful thing about this book is that it doesn't present an unattainable, “perfect” image of mothering. How-to books on parenting can leave a reader feeling inadequate, as if the author is saying, “It's easy, just do this and there'll be no problem!” This book shatters the myth about “having it all together.” It tells it like it is.

The reality is we're all just winging it, but thank goodness there are books like this to help us along. Elizabeth Lyons doesn't claim to have all the answers, but by golly, she sure does have a lot of them. I trust her wisdom and her judgment. And I'll tell you something else. If 10 years from now she writes a book called *Ready or Not, We Hate You and Are Never Speaking to You Again! The Real Experts Guide to the Teen Years with Twins*, I will buy the first copy off the press. ♡

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Susan Carney, who lives in Gilbertsville, Penn., has written a number of times for TWINS™ about her life with a dynamic duo.

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## The Top 10 Questions & Comments Thrown at Elizabeth Lyons About Her Boy/Girl Twins:

“Yes, misunderstanding about twins and their twin-ness abounds. Yet I am still constantly caught off guard by some questions and comments ... on a daily basis. My favorites:

### 10 ‘Do you take them out by yourself?’ (said in disbelief)

I don't think I look incapable. Granted, the comment was made when the babies were on apnea monitors, and being out and about created a spectacle at the time. I don't think people expect us to live like cloistered nuns, but who knows?

### 9 ‘Do they cry at the same time?’

At the beginning, they both cried basically nonstop. Then yes, much

of the time they were both crying at the same time. In fact, often one cries simply because the other is crying, and the non-crier thinks he is missing out on something.

### 8 ‘Do twins run in your family?’

The funniest thing about this question is people often ask it after I've already told them we had in vitro.

### 7 ‘Do they have different personalities?’

What I want to say is, “Do your kids have different personalities?” I guess I could somewhat understand asking that about identical twins, since there is a lot of misinformation about identical twins out there to begin with. But fraternal? What does that mean, exactly? Equally disorienting are those who expect my children to be polar opposites—if one is on the shy side (the quiet one), people automatically assume the other is the loud one! And so forth.

## 6 'Are they twins?'

I don't think they look nine months apart, though Jacob is definitely bigger. His feet and hands are enormous, he outweighs Megan by about two pounds, and he's built like a linebacker. Megan is smaller and more delicate (well, in appearance at least). I guess I could be babysitting someone else's kid, but frankly, why would I have a double stroller?

## 5 'Oh, how cute, two little boys.'

Now mind you, I'm not much into the pink frou-frou. Some baby girl clothing is, in my opinion, over the top. Megan wears her share of football jerseys, plain jeans, and the like. But when I've gotten these comments, they always seemed to come when Megan was sporting some combination of pink, purple, ruffles and flowers. Plus, the girl has the longest eyelashes in the world and a beauty mark that rivals Cindy Crawford's. Not to mention the fact that at 16 months, she is already hard at work honing her manipulation skills. What do people think? That I'm subjecting my twin sons to my own cruel little gender experiment? Dress one like a boy and one like a girl and see what happens?

## 4 'Are they a lot of work for you?'

My mother, the babies and I were shopping when the saleswoman asked me this with a straight face. Meanwhile, Megan was rubbing the snickerdoodle cookie her grandmom had just bought for her into her hair, while Jacob was clearly trying to see how fine a powder he could grind his cookie into against the tray of his stroller. I responded with a deadpan, "Oh, no, not at all." Really, if you have to even ask, what's the point?

## 3 'Did you know you were having twins?'

This one stops me cold every time. I realize that in the history of twins, the advent of ultrasound is relatively new, but it's certainly been around longer than my kids have. With the exception of the dimwit on "Friends" who gave her babies to Monica and Chandler, I never heard of anyone in this generation who didn't know they were having twins until, well, until they actually had them. I know a woman whose twins are about my age who didn't know until the second one popped out, but I don't think I look like I'm old enough to be my own mother.

## 2 'Are they identical?'

My twins: A.) Are different sexes (Hellooooo!?) and B.) Look nothing alike. My daughter has dark hair and a medium complexion, while my son is blonde and can get a sunburn in the time it takes to carry him to the car. Plus, there's the size discrepancy, as noted above. I'm not sure what these onlookers' definition of identical is, and I don't want to ask.

## 1 'What makes them "not identical"?'

I actually had this as a follow-up to the question above, on more than one occasion. I try to just say plainly, "They are a boy and a girl," as if it weren't painfully obvious to everyone else in the room. One person then actually said, "Well, other than that?" as if being different sexes somehow wasn't enough of a difference to account for their non-identicalness. I've started a list of possible responses: Their DNA. His penis and her vagina. My son's Fred Flintstone feet. But again, if you have to ask in the first place....

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# Watchdog mode

Being vigilant doesn't begin to describe what we do. That is, to keep tabs on the whereabouts of our toddlers, who have a real knack for disappearing into thin air while exploring their vast and wonderful world.

At this 3-year-old stage, each experience has *KID ADVENTURE!* boldly stamped upon it. The itch to discover grows faster than they do. For us, it's positively nerve-racking. And twice as taxing to keep our crafty twin-creatures in sight, in hand, or both.

At times, I'd swear my charges were distantly related to Houdini. They have the squirmy-wormy hand-wriggle maneuver down pat, allowing them to slip from my grasp faster than greased pigs. The challenge then is to track their curly little tails, merrily bouncing hither and yon, and corralling them back to me—minus any major meltdowns (theirs or mine).

Their "skip and scam drill," by contrast, is far more disconcerting. It requires dedicated teamwork and precise timing on the parts of twin-urchins to be effective. The object: Break free from parental control and bolt simultaneously in opposite directions.

This clever ploy has had me nearly frantic more than once; so frantic I turned to our trusty kid-gear catalog for help. I promptly ordered a set of skedaddle-proof harnesses for some pint-sized fugitives I know. Now my biggest problems are dealing with the tangled mess of straps I often find around my ankles, knees and waist.



ILLUSTRATION BY MARY PETERSON

And I loathe the frosty stares from people who don't embrace the concept of kids on leashes. (At least I don't carry a pooper-scooper or dog biscuits. I suppose that would put some folks over the edge!)

## Are twins descended from Houdini, or what?

For budding escape artists, any place rife with distractions or chaos is perfect for a smooth getaway: carnivals, amusement parks, fairgrounds, parade routes, beaches, museums and, especially, shopping malls. All represent a veritable sea of opportunity for those eager to taste freedom.

Even youngsters who don't pine for escape from the confines of Mom- and Dadville can easily fade into the woodwork in such environments—unnerving even the most composed parents.

It's no wonder that while attending parties and cook-outs with our twins, we wear a frazzled "I'm-not-paying-attention-to-this-conversation-because-I'm-scanning-the-premises-for-my-gosh-darned-twins" expression. It's tough to relax when our charges mingle with their miniature cronies, running here, there and everywhere. Whoever said twins always stick together told us a big, fat lie.

Case in point: While attending a child's birthday party last summer, I slipped deep into my familiar watchdog mode, nervously counting heads every nanosecond or so. My heart skipped whenever I came up with less than two, or realized I was tracking the wrong set of curly-haired little heads.

During one such trying moment, one of my twins disappeared. Terrible thoughts raced through my mind: Had she fallen in the water? Worse yet, the porta-potty? Had she wandered near the road? Or into poison ivy? Anxiously, I surveyed the area to no avail. I alerted my husband so he, too, could drop everything and scour the grounds.

I'll never forget the look on his face as he calmly informed me our "lost" twin was standing alongside me, my arm comfortably wrapped around her shoulders. I don't care what people say; I'm blaming it all on too much sun, too much birthday cake or, perhaps, the fact that sometimes two is just too much. Here's looking for you, kid. ♥

Mindy Wentzel, Williamsport, Penn., is mom to 5-year-old twins. She operates a website called [www.notesfromplanetmom.com](http://www.notesfromplanetmom.com) and is a prolific writer.

# Twin power: Positive reinforcement, squared

by Liz Gooch

**S**ince our twins arrived six years ago, followed closely by our third child, we've come to appreciate a force that must be reckoned with that's far greater than parental authority. It is called twin reinforcement.

A variation on the popular discipline concept of positive reinforcement, twin reinforcement works much the same way.

**Step 1:** A behavior initiated by one twin is something the other twin finds interesting, amusing, or entertaining. (This might entail taboo gestures, words, sounds, or...)

**Step 2:** The behavior is immediately reinforced by a prompt, startling, or otherwise unmistakable sound or gesture of appreciation.

**Step 3:** Having elicited a reinforcing response from his twin, the initiating child repeats said behavior, sometimes to the consternation and outright frustration of parents.

We've all been there. One twin introduces a new word (or variation on a previously banned word with only minor modification), and is immediately gratified with a guffaw, hastily concealed giggle, or spray of milk from his twin's nose. The parent dutifully responds with swift admonishment, following with reminders about appropriateness of language at the dinner table, and concludes with threats of consequences for further transgression.

But your practiced speech falls on deaf ears because "positive twin reinforcement" has already occurred. Payday was the delight in his twin's appreciative reaction. Parental disapproval is merely a cost of doing business.

In my experience, there is little a parent can do to prevent this transaction from occurring. Parental displeasure rarely competes with twin approval. Other than the tried-and-true multiples parenting technique, known as Divide-and-Conquer (which only works if the initiating behavior or the reinforcing response are at least in

part visual, otherwise the separation must be such that noises are not easily shared), I am unaware of any effective technique to break the cycle of PTR.

Maybe that's okay. PTR is, after all, part of the bond multiples have that will hopefully last a lifetime, even if it leaves parents feeling left out and even undermined from time to time. I've often considered that the more we attempt to intervene and circumvent (even sabotage) their PTR, the stronger it is likely to become. After all, as any good general will tell you, a sure-fire way to unite two forces is to present them with a common foe.

Rather than try to prevent positive twin reinforcement, we are well advised to figure ways to make good use of the phenomenon. PTR can sometimes be harnessed to a parent's advantage. Take dental hygiene, for example. Rather than trying to entice two toddlers to allow us to demonstrate on each the proper use of a toothbrush, we focused on one child alone. Luck was with us—our daughter took to toothbrushing like a seasoned pro. Having witnessed his sister having her teeth brushed with no obvious ill effects, her twin brother was willing to give it a go as well.

We adopted a similar strategy with the first visit to the dentist. I encouraged my daughter to go first, knowing that there was a greater chance she would be cooperative with the dental hygienist and thus unwittingly provide the positive twin reinforcement to encourage her brother to play along.

But beware, there is more than a little risk involved with this game plan, I will admit! Nonetheless, the rewards can make negotiating the umpteenth round of "No, 'lollipop-head' is NOT all right just because lollipop is a nice word" almost worth it. ♥

Liz Gooch, a mom of three in suburban Atlanta married to a police officer, is a biomedical research scientist. She enjoys writing for work and pleasure. She's an enthusiastic reader of TWINS™ since becoming a mother of twins.



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# At home— and stuck inside— with toddler twins!

By Karen Forman

The silence was deafening. I was trying to catch up on some laundry. Silly me, thinking I could leave Thing 1 and Thing 2 alone for even a few minutes. I had last seen Stephanie and Jessica about 10 minutes ago, quietly watching a video.

Had the show ended before I finished matching the socks? Where were my 2-year-olds, and what could they be up to now? I raced through the house, opening and closing doors frantically as I ran. Would I find them before they created chaos? Whoever coined the term Double Trouble definitely had my two in mind.

I peered nervously into the bathroom. Toilet paper still intact. Whew. Their newest hobby was grabbing hold of the toilet paper's tail and running through the house with it.

Opening my bedroom door, I saw the light in my bathroom shining beneath the door. Heart pounding, I opened the door to discover a pair of guilty-faced toddlers, one with scissors in hand. I looked at the floor and screamed when I saw the pile of hair. The girls screamed back, frightened. I then saw what I hadn't noticed at first glance: Jessica had been shorn of her fluttery bangs. Stephanie dropped the scissors, her face wrinkling with sobs. Jessica, in her hope not to be left out, cried too.

I didn't know whether to cry, laugh, or take a photo. Instead, I scooped up the hair, put it in a Ziploc bag and labeled it—Jessica's first haircut.

Then I took a deep breath, struggling to regain control of the situation. I was the adult here. Even two-against-one, I was bigger than they were. And smarter. (Wasn't I?) I could surely devise constructive activities for my kids. Not destructive ones. I remembered with trepidation an evening only last

week when I had run to the bathroom after dinner, leaving the giant bottle of ketchup from Costco on the kitchen table. Returning moments later, I found my twins happily making art. They had poured a big mound of ketchup on the table, were putting their hands in the pile, then pressing lovely red handprints on my white kitchen walls.

Could I find a way to use their creative powers for good instead of evil? There had to be a way. I called my mom, a preschool teacher, for help. Her answer? Make play-dough with the girls.

She gave me a foolproof recipe for no-cook play-dough that the girls can help make. And for that, I'll be forever grateful.

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I remembered with trepidation an evening only last week when I had run to the bathroom after dinner, leaving the giant bottle of ketchup from Costco on the kitchen table. Returning moments later, I found my twins happily making art.

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It's easy and fun. The girls love it. We learned the hard way you have to store it in plastic bags as soon as you're finished—turns to stone quickly, if not put away. Sometimes it came out too sticky and we added more flour. It doesn't taste very good, either (it's not edible) and lasts only about a week. But every week we made a different color, to fit the girls' whims.

Then we learned how to make bubbles. This kept Steph and Jess busy for hours, blowing bubble after bubble. And when they

accidentally (or intentionally) poured some of it on the ground, I didn't get upset. We just made some more.

Since I knew following the barbershop incident they loved to use scissors, I got them each a pair of blunt-nosed, small-child scissors—red for Stephanie, blue for Jessica. They sat with the Sunday newspaper and half-shredded, half-cut their way through it all. Both found this endlessly entertaining and looked forward to this exciting activity every Sunday or Monday morning.

When the driveway wasn't covered with snow, we would go outside armed with a box of different-colored pieces of chalk. I learned of a game my friend had played with her girls—she drew a shape on the blacktop with a piece of chalk and the kids would try to be first to name it correctly. I had my two guessing colors, shapes, and eventually letters and numbers. They loved trying to draw objects themselves too.

I discovered my twins love to "wash" the dishes for me. I would pull two chairs up to the kitchen sink, fill the sink with water and dishwashing liquid, then add Tupperware containers and plastic cups and let the girls go wild. They thought they were helping me. Though they usually got themselves and the floor soaking wet, an hour or more passed while they had a great time.

One day I had a brainstorm. Why not let them take Tupperware containers, plastic bowls and cups into the bathtub? Until this point, tub time was a battle. An episode of Rugrats showing Chuckie afraid of being swept down the drain left them quaking at the thought of baths. But with the containers to be "washed" they asked to go in the bathtub every evening!

At one point, it seemed they'd stay there forever, filling and emptying containers with



# Make your own playdough and bubbles

There are dozens of recipes for “no-cook” playdough, all very similar. For all of them, if the dough is too sticky, add more flour. Some of them may smell good, but **NONE** should be eaten!

No-cook playdough doesn't last as long as the cooked variety—a week tops. And it must be refrigerated in sealed plastic bags or airtight containers. But your toddlers can help you make it—half the fun. The other half is playing with it. Buy plastic playdough tools in a discount store, or use popsicle sticks, plastic utensils, children's scissors, cookie cutters and rolling pins as tools.

A few recipes that work well:

## Uncooked Playdough

- 1 cup flour
- ¼ cup salt
- ¼ cup water

Have child mix flour and salt in bowl, then add water. Knead and squeeze dough until it reaches desired consistency. You may need to add more water.

## Kim's Uncooked Playdough

- 3 cups flour
- 1 cup salt

Place in mixing bowl. Keep adding small amounts of water and mix until dough is workable but not sticky. Add food coloring or Jello mix for colors and good smells.

## Kool-Aid Playdough

- Mix together:
- 2 cups flour
  - 1 cup salt
  - 4 teaspoons cream of tartar
  - 2 Tablespoons oil
  - 2 pkgs. unsweetened Kool-Aid drink mix.

Stir in 2 cups boiling water. Cool before kneading.

## Easy No-Cook Oatmeal Playdough

- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup oatmeal (old-fashioned, not quick-cook)
- 1 cup water
- Food coloring if desired

Mix ingredients in medium bowl until dough forms ball. Transfer to lightly floured surface, knead dough until smooth and no longer sticky.

## Bubble solutions—

Mix recipes a day before using bubbles, for best results. Glycerine (inexpensive; can be found at most drugstores, in pharmacy or first-aid section) is a clear liquid that makes bubbles stronger

(makes molecules of water bind together). Use Joy or Dawn dishwashing liquid (other brands don't make good bubbles).

- Using a quart-size container, mix
- 1 cup Joy/Dawn dishwashing liquid
- 1 to 3 Tbsp glycerine (start w/2, add more as needed)

Pour detergent into container, add glycerine, then add water very slowly (so it doesn't foam up) to fill the container.

**For a big batch:** Use 1 gallon container, entire 16 oz. bottle detergent, entire 4-6 oz. bottle of glycerine, fill container slowly with water.

## Bubble Gadgets: The following items create great bubbles:

- plastic berry baskets
- long pipe cleaners, bent into shapes
- six-pack holders (plastic kind w/ holes for necks of bottles)
- funnels
- plastic straws (use a single straw or tape several together)
- paper cups (poke hole in bottom of cup, dip rim of cup into bubble solution and blow through the hole)

## Color-My-World Tub Paints

Good clean fun! Make paints in muffin tin or ice cube tray for instant palette. Your kids won't want to leave the bathtub for hours.

- 2 cups liquid hand soap—clear or white
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch
- Food coloring

Time needed: >1 hour

Combine soap, cornstarch in small bowl. Divide mixture into little containers, add colors 1 drop at a time. Let rest a bit. Remains liquid...does not solidify.

- Test paints on small area of tub / wall in advance to ensure they won't leave stains; darker hues more difficult to remove.
- Apply liquid colors to tub and body w/fingers or paintbrushes.
- Bathroom cleanser cleans tub if color remains.
- Refrigerate leftover paints in airtight container(s), up to 3 days.

—Karen Forman

## My First playdough

Kids love playdough. It's great for development, but it can also be expensive. Try making homemade playdough. This recipe is great for toddlers—it is non-toxic and is very soft and pliable for little hands. Mix 3 cups flour, 1/4 cup oil, 1/2 to 3/4 cup of water. Knead well. Add a tiny amount of food coloring if desired (food coloring is not permanent but may stain clothes). Store homemade playdough in the refrigerator in ziploc bags or airtight containers for future use. If oil separates during storage, simply re-knead the mixture before giving it to the kids.

—Kelly Woods

water. When that got old, another friend gave me a recipe for tub paints, made mostly from soap and food coloring. My girls went crazy smearing “paints” all over themselves and each other. It was like a dream come true: I could sit reading a good book and watch them have a ball.

I ended up devoting an entire bottom kitchen cabinet to all the plastic containers and cups I had accumulated. The girls got them out whenever they wanted. I soon added different sized measuring cups, plastic spoons and spatulas to the collection. Jess and Steph would take things in and out of the bowls, pretend to mix ingredients with their spoons, and laugh their heads off the entire time. This activity seemed like something really amazing to them. And it was amazing to me to watch them.

Music has always been a huge favorite. I tried to always have some background music playing while we played. Music supposedly soothes the savage beast, and it really worked for my two. They loved wearing my mother-in-law’s high-heeled shoes to dance to music—didn’t matter what kind, any music would do, from Raffi to ’50s rock to the current Top 40.

An old wives’ saying has it that kids like boxes and wrapping paper better than actual presents. For my twins, that was the truth. One of the best times we had was after purchasing a big-screen TV. The box was enormous. We set it up in the den. My husband cut a window on each side and a door in the front. Stephanie and Jessica decorated it with their crayons, and voila! Their clubhouse was born. They thought it was the coolest thing ever. I couldn’t get rid of it until it literally fell apart.

We had a lot of “bear picnics” inside the clubhouse, where we took a blanket, put it inside the floor of our box, brought our teddy bears and our plastic tea set, and had a tea party. I would fill their little teacups with water and we’d have cookies or some other snack. The twins loved to play dress-up, and would often come to these parties adorned in their finest colored beads, Grandma’s high heels, some cast-off handbag, and, of course, a party dress. They loved it when I painted their fingernails and toenails some hideously bright color, especially blue. Sometimes they would beg me to paint each toe or fingernail a different color, so they looked like multi-colored jelly beans.

Despite the endless games and activities I came up with, there still were days when the duo got the best of me. At times, we all cried. (I remember with particular horror the time they decided to paint their own fingernails and somehow scaled a very tall dresser in my bedroom, knocking the entire box of nail polish to the floor. Dark blue nail polish flowing from its shattered bottle left a very permanent stain in new beige carpet.)

I never did become a June-Cleaver-perfect mom. At times during long cold winters, I figured they needed outdoor fun, but getting two squirming girls into snowsuits, hats and mittens proved too overwhelming. (I’d finish with one twin, start on the second, turn around and find the first half-undressed again.)

Friends who had one baby or toddler couldn’t understand why I didn’t want to take my twins to the mall for a “relaxing” afternoon of lunch and shopping. If only they knew. ♡

Karen Forman is the mother of four daughters now. Her twins are turning 13 and are devilish as ever! She still has Jessica’s hair in a Ziploc bag. Her personal motto is: If you obey all the rules, you miss all the fun!

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# TWIN TAKES

from the horse's mouth

■ by Jennifer Jordan

**PARENTS ALWAYS ASK:** Twins commonly have the same friends. This means one is always having to “share” the friend with the co-twin. Is this good, bad or ugly? What if it turns out that a shared friend ends up liking one twin better than the other, and naturally gravitates toward doing more things with that particular twin? Where does that leave the other person? Is it necessary, or important, for each twin to have one or two separate friends who are that twin's alone as an individual? Should parents encourage each twin to make some separate friends, or does this eventually just begin to happen?

**JENNIFER'S TAKE:** My sister and I always had the same friends when growing up. We always attended the same birthday parties and slumber parties. And whenever we had a friend over, we always had to agree on who the lucky guest would be. In a nutshell, our peers were given a two-for-one deal or no deal at all.

I don't think this is an ideal thing, but I believe it is inevitable. When kids are young, they make friends in a limited number of settings—at school, in their neighborhood, and in extracurricular activities (e.g., Girl Scouts, teams, other groups). Because these places are in both twins' lives, having the same friends is bound to happen, at least to some extent.

It's not the worst thing in the world for twins to share friends, but it can be frustrating for each twin.

When my sister and I shared a friend, we often felt as if we needed to compete with each other for the adoration of that friend. A twin's Achilles' heel is hearing your twin say to someone, “Well, so-and-so likes me better.”

But, that's only part of the problem. The other problem lies in the fact that a particular friend will become mad at one twin, and then automatically becomes mad at the other twin, too—the two-for-one deal carries over into the natural realm of petty irritations and falling-outs among kids. When you're a kid, it's easy enough to alienate your peers for something you did, but when you're a twin, you're just as likely to alienate people for something done by your DNA. Is this fair? Of course not.

And, of course, there is no way all friends of a set of twins can possibly like both twins equally. Twins have different personalities—one may be stubborn and the other radiant with charisma (but enough about me).

Ultimately, one may be better liked by one friend and the other better liked by a different friend. Yet, it is as if there is a mythical “Twin Handbook” that states it is impossible for this to happen. Kids are usually taught that, when it comes to a set of twins, it's necessary to like—and treat—both equally. This proves unfair to each twin and their friends alike.

Most twins eventually make separate friends. My sister and I began to have separate friends in middle school. We still, to this day, have a few of the same friends. But most are either “her friends” or “my friends”. In a few instances, we inadvertently swapped friends—her best friend in high school is now, 10 years later, my best friend. It just happens that way, as it does with any friendships, twin-related or not.

The “same friend” dilemma eventually resolves itself. But it's very helpful if parents encourage each twin, early on, to each have at least one separate friend. One way to do this is put them in separate classes at school at some point. Another way is to encourage each twin to engage in an activity that doesn't duplicate the other twin's.

My parents initially pushed us toward all of the same activities. My sister wanted to take gymnastics, and so I was also enrolled. In what proved to be money very well spent, I spent most gymnastics classes faking hurt so I could sit on the sidelines and play with my stuffed animals. My parents eventually stopped encouraging us to have the same activities—my sister took classes she wanted and I took ones I wanted. We made separate friends.

Unless twins set up a “Friend Draft” in which they pick and choose the people who will be their, and only their, friend through contractual obligation, most twins will share at least some friends. Parents might want to place their twins in situations where they will meet different people. When this isn't possible, and sharing friends becomes an issue, parents can help children understand it's okay if one twin is better friends with a certain individual. Likewise, if one twin is friends with someone, the other twin doesn't have to be friends with that person, too.

Just as twins are entitled to wear different outfits and like different things, they need to know they can choose to be friends, or not be friends, with whomever they want. ♡

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Jennifer Jordan, 28, is 20 minutes older than her identical twin and also has a younger sister. She is a copywriter at a graphic design firm in Denver and describes herself as “slightly obsessed” with the Denver Broncos, and *Grey's Anatomy* on ABC.

## What armadillos teach us about twins

As I've mentioned previously, the two basic types of twin sets are monozygotic (identical) and dizygotic (fraternal). I find it quite interesting that the chance of conceiving dizygotic twins varies among different populations, while the rate of monozygotic twinning is relatively constant throughout the world.

Much has been learned about monozygotic twinning from animal studies, especially with the armadillo. This shelled mammal is found in Texas and South America. The armadillo is unusual in that it almost always gives birth to monozygotic quadruplets. One variety of armadillo even routinely produces monozygotic octuplets. The armadillo's distinguishing reproductive feature is that following fertilization, its egg does not immediately implant into the uterine wall. This delay lasts several weeks, which is believed to set the stage for quadruplet formation once implantation occurs.

In humans, the split of a fertilized egg into two or more monozygotic embryos can occur anytime during the first two weeks following fertilization. For example, conjoined twins, although rare, result from a split near the end of the second week.

A study I reported recently showed monozygotic (identical) twinning is nine times more likely to take place if a woman becomes pregnant while she is breast-feeding an earlier newborn. That's a whopping 900% higher likelihood! Lactation is known to delay implantation of a fertilized egg, and this may be a clue to the mechanism involved with monozygotic twin pregnancies.

Dizygotic (fraternal) gestations involving two or more separately fertilized eggs vary with several factors. First of all, probably because of heredity, the rate varies within different racial groups. For example, African-Americans have the highest dizygotic twinning rate in the U.S., whereas Asians have the lowest. This type of twinning tends to run in families, especially through the mothers. The trait does not skip generations, as has been commonly believed. Thus, if your mother



Cole and Cassidy, 2 years

was a dizygotic twin, the chances that you will conceive dizygotic twins are higher than they would be for the general population.

Certain characteristics of the mother affect her likelihood of bearing twins. For example, taller women are more likely to have twins than shorter women. Also, the older a woman is (especially between 35 and 39) or the more children she's previously had, the greater the chances she will conceive twins.

### Drinking milk can influence likelihood of twinning

Of course, treatment by artificial methods, such as ovulation induction or in vitro fertilization (IVF), raises the rate of twinning. For example, with IVF, as many as one-third of all pregnancies include multiples.

I recently published a paper from a study in which I concluded that the rate of dizygotic (fraternal) twinning can be affected by the mother's diet. The key element seems to be the amount of insulin-like growth factor (IGF) present in a woman's body.

IGF, an important chemical that controls and affects many functions in the body, makes a woman's ovaries more sensitive to reproductive hormones, thereby increasing the chances two or more eggs will be released each month, instead of just one.

The amount of milk a woman drinks, in

particular, seems to have a significant effect on raising the body's level of IGF. Not only is IGF elevated in cow's milk, but other proteins in dairy products appear to protect it from destruction by pasteurization and digestion. Hence, the more milk one drinks, the higher the IGF level in the person consuming it.

In the United States, a common practice of dairy farmers is to give cows injections of growth hormones to increase their milk and beef production. Administering growth hormones also raises the level of IGF in the cow and in its milk. I strongly believe this may be the reason why, in the last several years, the rate of twinning has risen faster in the U.S. than in other countries where use of growth hormones in cattle is prohibited.

The factors that may affect a woman's chances of conceiving twins, especially dizygotic (fraternal) sets, include some that are fixed genetically (such as family history, race, and height) and others that are variable (maternal age at conception, number of previous pregnancies, and a history of breastfeeding). The latter group of factors are often variable as a result of the mother's choices ("elective" variables) whereas the genetic factors cannot be altered willingly.

These factors express a likelihood of conceiving twins within a broad population of women, not the probability that any particular individual will give birth to twins. In other words, if a particular woman decides she wants to have twins, drinking more milk won't necessarily guarantee that she will do so. But if a large group of similar women—a broad-based population—decides to increase milk consumption (other than organic or growth hormone-free milk), more members of this group are more likely to conceive twins than would have been probable before their change in diet. ♡

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Dr. Steinman is an OB/gyn and researcher in Astoria, NY. If you have specific questions for him about zygosity or twinning, e-mail him at DAV4601@aol.com. He may be able to provide answers and discussion in upcoming issues.



## Snug as a Bug in a Rug: Do Twins Sleep Better When Swaddled?

By Susan Heim

When Lainie Ceasar and her husband brought newborn twins Max and Zack home after a 10-day stay in the neonatal intensive care unit, they tried to swaddle their boys like the nurses had demonstrated in the hospital.

“They would sleep more frequently and seemed more at peace while swaddled,” says Lainie. But the Ceasars didn’t have much luck swaddling using standard receiving blankets. “Our little Houdini-boys would constantly get out of our swaddles... especially the swaddles I put on them in the middle of the night with a foggy head!”

Then the Ceasars discovered swaddling blankets specifically designed to keep babies securely and safely swaddled. Now Lainie insists a swaddling blanket is a “must-have for parents of multiples!”

### What is swaddling?

The practice of swaddling—wrapping a baby’s body snugly in a blanket to sleep—has been around for centuries. Many Native Americans traditionally swaddled babies. Remember the etching of Sacajawea on the U.S. dollar coin with her baby bundled snugly on her back? According to Dr. Harvey Karp in his book, *The Happiest Baby on the Block*, “For tens of thousands of years, mothers living in cool climates have swaddled their babies. . . . History has recorded that Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar and Jesus were all swaddled as babies. . . . And now, our nation has also rediscovered that babies like being wrapped as snug as a bug in a rug.”

### Benefits of swaddling

When done correctly, experts say, swaddling makes a baby happier because the infant feels as if it is still held tightly in the womb. Once an infant’s limbs are free from the confines of the uterus, babies are often afflicted with the startle reflex—their arms and legs pop up and jerk spasmodically when the infant is placed on its back. Experts believe this is because the infant intuitively thinks it’s falling.

Naturally, this jerking usually wakes the infant. Because parents have been advised in recent years to place infants on their backs to reduce the risk of death from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) when sleeping, swaddling has become even more popular to help ensure better sleep.

Swaddling also makes a baby feel as if it’s being cuddled, just as if the child is resting in its mother’s arms. Studies have shown that being touched is essential to babies’ normal development.

Swaddling is thought by some to send a signal to a baby that it’s bedtime. Suzi Sweeten’s infant son John quickly learned to associate being swaddled with the need to sleep. His eyes would droop as soon as Suzi, Boca Raton, Fla., began wrapping him in his swaddling blanket. Mom of twins Adarezza Ferrer, Pleasant Hill, Calif., too, found that her babies “knew that if they were swaddled, it meant they had to go to sleep.”

Researchers at University Children’s Hospital, Brussels, Belgium, concluded very recently that, “[W]hen infants between six and 16 weeks of age sleep swaddled and supine, they sleep longer, spend more time in NREM sleep, and awake less spontaneously than when not swaddled.” (*Influence of Swaddling on Sleep and Arousal Characteristics of Healthy Infants*, Pediatrics, May, 2005.)

### Swaddling blanket vs. receiving blanket

If benefits are so numerous, why don’t more parents swaddle their babies? The truth is, it’s tough to learn how to swaddle a baby properly using a standard blanket. The blanket must be tight enough to stay fastened and make the baby feel secure, and yet loose enough so that the infant doesn’t become overheated.

Once a baby starts moving around, he often kicks off his blanket, and a loose blanket in the crib can increase the risk of SIDS. According to Mike Gatten, creator of the Miracle Blanket, Medford, Ore., “receiving blankets become too small very quickly—usually by 2 weeks of age” and therefore aren’t effective in swaddling a baby.

Now a wide variety of specially-made swaddling blankets designed to overcome the limitations of traditional swaddling are available. These blankets may be shaped to fit a baby’s body, long enough to wrap around his body, and might have Velcro fasteners to prevent an infant from pulling the swaddle loose.

### Swaddling helpful for multiples

Name of Product	Company Name	Why You Should Buy This Product	Prices	How to Purchase	Evaluator's Comments
Swaddleaze: The Original 2-in-1 Swaddler & Sleep Sack	2 Virtues, Inc.	Swaddleaze is the only swaddler that fastens in the back, which its maker says ensures it's ultra safe & secure. Swaddleaze is available in three sizes for preemies, newborns and infants and comes in the plushest, softest, luxe fabrics (chamois fleece and cotton terry) in bright colors.	\$25. Parents of twins can buy three Swaddleazes and get one FREE by entering coupon code TWINS at checkout	Web site: <a href="http://www.swaddleaze.com">www.swaddleaze.com</a> or phone: 877-276-6022	Very easy to figure out. The only blanket with a zipper, but they should have installed the zipper to work from top to bottom.
The Snug & Tug—The Swaddling Blanket That Works!	Mama Go Designs, LLC—Practical Products Made for Moms by Moms	Blanket is relatively new to the market. Maker says it has perfected the design. No other blanket on the market offers a full body pouch, an opening for a secure double-wrap, and Velcro—giving it 3 layers of security. Snug & Tug's design is said to be wiggle-proof.	\$45 (includes shipping and gift wrap). Get 10% off a purchase of 2 blankets with promo code 1914207. To purchase 4 blankets, e-mail <a href="mailto:mail@gomamagodesigns.com">mail@gomamagodesigns.com</a> for a larger discount.	Snug & Tug is available at <a href="http://www.snugandtug.com">www.snugandtug.com</a> , and also at stores in VA, DC, MD, MA, NY, MO, and TX. Visit their Web site to see the complete list.	Creative packaging makes this the best presentation as a gift! Slit on side for Velcro to go through keeps baby tightly wrapped without fabric being too close to the neck.
SwaddleMe® Adjustable Infant Wrap	Kiddopotamus & Company	The award-winning SwaddleMe's most popular features include: a foot pouch that pops down for easy diaper changes with no need to unswaddle the baby; easy-to-use wings with adjustable self-fasteners for a custom fit as baby grows; an assortment of fabrics to select from to ensure baby is sleeping comfortably and safely all night; choice of three sizes to ensure safe, secure fit for each baby.	\$9.99-\$12.99. Check with your local retailer about discounts for multiple purchases.	Visit <a href="http://www.swaddleme.com">www.swaddleme.com</a> , <a href="http://www.kiddopotamus.com">www.kiddopotamus.com</a> or call 1-800-772-8339 to locate a retailer near you.	Best feature is you can easily change a diaper with arms still swaddled. Great for middle of the night! Fabric is thin enough to be easily tucked under baby when changing diaper.
The Ultimate Receiving Blanket™	SwaddleDesigns®	The Ultimate Receiving Blanket is a super soft, stylish and functional, multi-use blanket designed by a nurse, and is larger than average receiving blankets and square in shape. Swaddling instructions are sewn to its edge, which makes learning to swaddle easy as 1-2-3! Parents may choose from SwaddleDesigns' multitude of colors and prints in blankets and coordinating products.	Suggested retail price: \$24. Check with your local retailer about discounts for multiple purchases.	Available at Nordstrom, BabyCenter.com, and over 300 retailers across the country and internationally. Visit <a href="http://www.SwaddleDesigns.com">www.SwaddleDesigns.com</a> .	Very soft fabric. Directions are clear, just like in hospital. This is a huge sized blanket, but offers no extra features at all.
Miracle Blanket®	AMB Enterprises, Parent company of the Miracle Blanket®	The Miracle Blanket®'s patented design creates the most perfect swaddle possible without the use of knots, Velcro, buttons or fasteners. Manufacturer wants people to give it a try; if it doesn't work, the company will refund their money. Miracle Blanket has a generous guarantee policy, and says it receives very few returns. Miracle Blanket customers actually named this product.	\$29.95. Receive a 15% discount for purchasing multiple blankets.	Visit <a href="http://www.MiracleBlanket.com">www.MiracleBlanket.com</a> to find online or local retailers. For Customer Service, call (866) 286-6386	No fasteners at all. There's a lot of fabric to get under the baby, which is difficult when he's fussing.

Disclaimer: TWINS™ Magazine does not endorse any particular make or model of swaddling device, nor is there any implied warranty of any product listed in this chart. The descriptions of each product were provided by the manufacturers, and their claims have been neither proven nor disproven by TWINS™.

“Parents of twins have double the challenge of caring and comforting their newborns,” says Lynette Damir, R.N., founder and CEO of SwaddleDesigns, Seattle, Wash. “When parents of twins swaddle their babies, the parents benefit as well as the babies. When babies sleep better because they are swaddled, parents sleep more, too.”

Kristen Peterson, VP of Product Development at Kiddopotamus, maker of the SwaddleMe® blanket, Leawood, Kan., reports, “I have talked with parents of twins who, in looking back, say they don't know how they survived the sleep deprivation and exhaustion of the first months. Parents and babies need all the help they can get, and the SwaddleMe® can be one of the most valuable products twins will ever use as it calms and soothes them, helps them sleep longer and better, and helps them feel better by containing their extra movements.”

Multiples are often born prematurely, making it all the more important that their “energy should be reserved for growth, not trying to keep themselves warm or getting to sleep,” says Heather Allard, inventor of the Swaddleaze swaddler and sleep sack, Pawtucket, R.I.

Many parents give up swaddling quickly because their babies don't seem to like it. But it doesn't take long before most babies

realize they love it, parents reported. Some babies never grow accustomed to swaddling, but the vast majority sleep better as a result of being swaddled. If your babies resist swaddling at first, Dr. Karp advises, “Be patient. You may have to practice a few times before [the baby] gets used to it. Try swaddling when she's already sleepy and in her most receptive frame of mind.”

### Which product should I buy?

Swaddling blankets on the market are all a little different. TWINS™ Magazine researched several of the most popular products and asked new mom Suzi Sweeten, Boca Raton, to test them on her newborn son, born July 12, 2006. TWINS™ also interviewed representatives from several companies that sell swaddling blankets to ask them why they think their product is superior to those of competitors. (See accompanying chart for details.) ♡

Susan M. Heim edited *Twice the Love: Stories of Inspiration for Families of Twins, Multiples and Singletons*, published by TWINS™ Magazine. Her next book, *It's Twins! Parent-to-Parent Advice from Birth Through Adolescence*, will be published by Hampton Roads in early 2007. Susan is the mother of four sons, including 3-year-old dizygotic twins.

# TWINS

By Arnot Ross McCallum©

My name's Peter, his name's Paul,  
We're both kinda thin,  
We're both kinda tall.  
We both play hockey,  
We won't jump rope.  
We both hate baths  
We both hate soap.  
We both love to wrestle,  
We both love to box.  
We both go to school  
With dirty smelly socks.  
We both ride bikes,  
We belch in school.

We're both kinda smart,  
We're both kinda cool.  
We both hate kissin'  
And all that mush.  
We both use the toilet  
And never ever flush.  
My Mom thanks heaven every day,  
There are no triplets on the way!

Arnot McCallum is an educator, storyteller and author of children's books who lives in Tecumseh, Ontario, Canada. His website is [www.notabrat.com](http://www.notabrat.com)

Catherine and Benjamin, 8 months



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## Grace and Luke have happy hearts and each other

I have 22-month-old twins, Luke and Grace. They are alive today because of the grace of God and are truly our precious little miracles.

I was only 20 weeks pregnant when we learned our daughter had a condition called “truncus arteriosus,” a serious heart abnormality.

We live in Costa Mesa, Calif., and our physician sent us immediately to Children’s Hospital of Los Angeles for a consultation with Mark Sklansky, MD, a cardiologist who had developed new fetal cardiac imaging techniques during the first trimester of pregnancy.

While performing the echocardiogram on our daughter, he not only confirmed her diagnosis, but discovered our son suffered from a different congenital heart defect called “tetralogy of fallot,” endangering his life as well.

No one knows the causes of these two conditions, or why my babies had them. But for parents who haven’t dealt with fetal heart defects, our case is instructive.

Our delight and excitement at the thought of having twins turned rapidly to overwhelming uncertainty. We wondered how and why this was happening, but realized that the Lord placed these special children with us for a reason. We had to be strong for them.

When I would meet a mom pregnant with twins I would ask, “Do you wish for boys, girls or one of each?” Each time, I heard the familiar reply, “It doesn’t matter. All I want is two healthy babies.” It would break my heart knowing that my sweet babies would have so much to overcome.

At 33 weeks, my son’s heart underwent major distress. His heartbeat dropped rapidly with each early contraction. Our doctor decided the babies would be born within the week at Long Beach Memorial Hospital. LBM has a great neonatal team and was close enough for the infants to be transported to Children’s Hospital/LA, where they would have open-heart surgery soon after delivery.

When I awoke following my c-section, I learned Luke and Grace were about to be transported by helicopter to Children’s. Grace’s serious condition dictated she be taken there immediately. Without surgery, a baby with truncus arteriosus usually survives only about two weeks, or at most a couple of months. With only a short time



Luke and Grace Chez at 22 months, both happy and active toddlers despite major heart problems and lots of surgeries.

to see and hold my children, I was overcome with emotion, helpless at having to stay where I was and recover for three days.

My husband stayed by Luke’s and Grace’s sides until the team came to whisk them away. I heard a helicopter overhead, tears streaming down my face. Suddenly, the team coming to retrieve my babies swept into my room with a single incubator. Luke and Grace were lying together inside, tiny and helpless, touching each other gently. I kissed them goodbye and spent a sleepless night thinking about how they were touching each other.

I couldn’t help but conclude during that long night the reason I’d had twins was so they’d have each other, in sickness and in health. Every doctor with whom we had spoken expressed astonishment and disbelief that I was pregnant with

fraternal twins, both with rare heart defects.

My darling twins will never be alone, throughout their long journeys toward health. My husband and I will be there for them, yet they will be able to say to each other, “I know exactly what you are going through.”

Following my discharge, I spent a day with Luke and Grace before their procedures. I sat in the CTICU watching my babies side by side, clinging to life. A catheterization was set for Luke the same morning as Grace’s surgery.

His procedure made it possible to wait a few months before embarking on Luke’s many subsequent surgeries. Although Luke breathed with difficulty and his skin was very blue, we felt blessed and thankful he would have time to grow stronger.

Grace, wheeled into surgery on Valentine’s Day, seemed to make it through the operation very well. But minutes later, her heart stopped and she went into cardiac arrest, hanging on to life. After eight long minutes (an eternity to us), she was resuscitated. Throughout this difficult time, I remained certain God gave me twins so they could always have one another.

Later that evening my husband told me that Luke, only five days old and a quiet baby, had stopped eating in his father’s arms in the CTICU and let out a very loud wail at exactly the moment when our daughter’s heart had stopped. It was as if Luke knew there was



something terribly wrong with his sister.

After five weeks living in hospital housing, taking turns being with Grace at the hospital and in the housing with Luke, we took both babies home until Luke's open-heart surgery several months later. Luke's surgery went well and although his recovery was heartbreakingly painful for him, the repair was successful.

Vaughn Starnes, MD, chair of cardiothoracic surgery at the Keck School of Medicine, USC, and director of the heart institute at Children's/LA, performed corrective surgery on both babies. He's known to be one of the world's leading pediatric cardiothoracic surgeons, and naturally, we think he's a miracle-worker.

"Learning that your baby has a congenital heart defect no longer means certain heartbreak. Thanks to intricate surgeries and earlier diagnoses, most tots with broken hearts don't just survive; they thrive," he told USC Magazine.

Ten months passed and we were home together, doing what I suspect most parents of twins do: Go crazy! We visited doctors continuously, and still do: Cardiologists, neurologists, GI specialists. Both children see an occupational therapist weekly.

Not a day passes that I fail to be amazed by Luke and Grace. They have progressed faster and farther than anyone predicted, and are doing extremely well.

## Heart ♥ defects

- "Truncus arteriosus" represents 1% to 2% of all congenital heart defects in live infants (U.S.). TA occurs in approx. 5 of 100,000 births
- "Tetralogy of fallot" represents 10% of congenital heart defects (U.S.)

Their connection with each other is what amazes me most. They seem to feel each other's pain and emotions all the time, no matter what the situation.

Our children will face many surgeries and challenges throughout their lives, but we've been told they'll not have many limitations placed on their activities. We are grateful to the amazing people who helped mend our children's hearts, but most of all to the Lord who was with us every step of the way. ♥

---

Terra Chez is married to Adam, whom she has known since childhood. In their mid-20s, they finally went on a date and three months later, were in Paris when Adam proposed marriage.



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## Do your homework to find a reliable, safe caregiver

**Q** You've settled in with your new bundles of joy and have finally decided to plan for that long overdue evening (or hour!) out with your spouse. In the days before parenting twins, picking the restaurant was the most challenging part of planning. Now you have the daunting task of finding a quality provider for your multiples.

As a nanny with over a decade of experience in caring for twins, I'd like to share some insights. One of the most common questions I get from parents of multiples is, "How can I find a caregiver who can handle my babies without being overwhelmed, when I—the mom!—am overwhelmed?"

**A** First, a few things it's helpful to remember. #1. The person you hire to care for your twins is "on duty" for a comparatively short period of time. #2. During that time, she or he is likely at her/his best. She more than likely sleeps through the night and is not emotionally and physically drained from the last few months of constantly caring for two, or three, or more children.

So, should the bounce in her step and her excitement to be with your babies surprise you? I'd say not.

When helping guide parents in their search for a caregiver, I always try to get them in an objective frame of mind at the outset. When I am asked, "How come you can take care of two crying babies without batting an eye or missing a beat?" I often use my banker's analogy: There are two kinds of bankers—the seasoned veteran, and the new kid on the block. Both love their jobs, both are hard workers and both are committed to excellence. What separates them? Experience.

It's often the case that professional childcare providers have more experience with multiples than first-time moms of multiples have. The caregiver isn't that much "better" than you; the reality is, she's more experienced, well rested and confident in her abilities. These are attributes you're sure to acquire over the next few months and years

yourself—once you've been there and done that, as the caregiver has.

Step back from your emotions and view your search for a caregiver as a "business decision." That's the best first step to landing your Mary Poppins.

Once you've decided to call in some help, determine what type of help you actually need. Do you need a helping hand while you are at home? Someone who comes in for a few hours 1-6 times a week while you get out to run errands? Or someone who is with your family full-time, fully in charge while you return to work?

Once you determine the type of care you need, make an outline of your basic criteria for a childcare provider, by completing the following statements. (Soliciting your spouse's input during this process can be especially helpful.)

- The minimum age of the caregiver we wish to employ is...
- The amount of previous childcare experience we require is...
- The number of verifiable references we'll need to check is...
- The primary language of the caregiver must be...
- The schedule we require is...
- The price we have budgeted to pay is...
- The benefits we are willing to offer are...
- The duties and responsibilities we wish the caregiver to have are...

For the safety of your twins, the caregiver should be a non-smoker and should be CPR/First Aid certified.

Once you've determined the type of care you need and the basic prerequisite qualifications the candidate must possess, it's time to start your search. If you are in need of a mother's helper, an older person of teenager recommended by your church may be just the perfect person. If you are looking for a full-time nanny to work unsupervised, your search process and criteria should be much more stringent.

I strongly recommend parents seeking full-time in-home childcare utilize the services of a reputable nanny placement

agency. A reputable agency will help you clarify your childcare needs and expectations and present to you only candidates who meet your requirements. This is a huge time saver! Using a placement agency can be expensive, but it's worth the investment. A reputable agency should do a criminal background check, driving record check, reference check and an in-depth interview with each candidate.

Whether you hear about a childcare provider by word-of-mouth, a nanny placement agency, a babysitting service or even by placing your ad on the Internet (gulp!), one thing is for sure—if you want to know who is caring for your twins, you're going to have to do your homework.

The screening process begins as you field the calls generated by your advertisement. Keep these important questions handy by the phone:

- Can I have your (complete) contact information?
- Are you CPR and First Aid certified?
- Tell me about yourself and your interests.
- Have you worked with twins before? In what capacity?
- What was your best childcare experience?
- What was your worst childcare experience? How did you handle it?
- Do you have references for me to contact?
- What is your rate and availability?

You can save lots of time screening calls by setting up your answering machine greeting to say something like this: "Thanks for calling. If you are calling about our childcare position, please leave a detailed message including your name and phone number, overview of your childcare experience, and the title of your favorite children's book. Please only leave a message if you have three verifiable references. Thanks." From the responses you receive, you'll be able to tell if the candidates meet your basic criteria and if they are able to follow instructions.

This allows you the luxury of returning calls at your convenience, choosing which



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**The International Nanny Association ([www.nanny.org](http://www.nanny.org)) has established the following definitions for in-home childcare providers:**

- **Babysitter:** Provides supervisory, custodial care of children on an irregular, full-time or part-time basis. No special training or background expected.
- **Au Pair (Foreign):** Foreign national in the United States for up to a year to experience American life. Lives as part of the host family and receives a small stipend in exchange for babysitting and help with housework. May or may not have previous childcare experience. (11 agencies are U.S. Dept. of State-designated to contract with au pairs.)
- **Parent's- / Mother's-Helper:** Lives in or out and works for a family to provide full-time childcare and domestic help for families in which one parent is home most of the time. May be left in charge of the children for brief periods of time. May or may not have previous childcare experience.
- **Nanny:** Employed by the family on either a live-in or live-out basis to undertake all tasks related to the care of children. Duties are generally restricted to childcare and the domestic tasks related to childcare. May or may not have had any formal training, though often has a good deal of actual experience. Nanny's work week ranges from 40 to 60 hours per week. Usually works unsupervised.

applicants to spend the most time getting to know. If you are satisfied with a lengthy phone interview, call all references provided. The most important questions you can ask a reference are, "Do you have any hesitations about leaving your child with this caregiver?" and, "Would you hire this caregiver again?" Listen carefully; it's not always what a reference says, it's what the person doesn't say that is most important. Even if you are using a placement agency or babysitting service, you should check personal and professional references yourself.

If you have made it this far in the interview process, it's time to set up a visit. Choose a time of day when your twins are usually awake and in a playful mood.

Be sure to observe the following:

- Is the applicant's appearance neat?
- Does she make eye contact when talking?
- Does she engage the twins in conversation?
- Does she wash her hands before picking up a baby?
- Does she get on the floor to interact with your toddlers?
- How does she emotionally respond to crying in stereo?

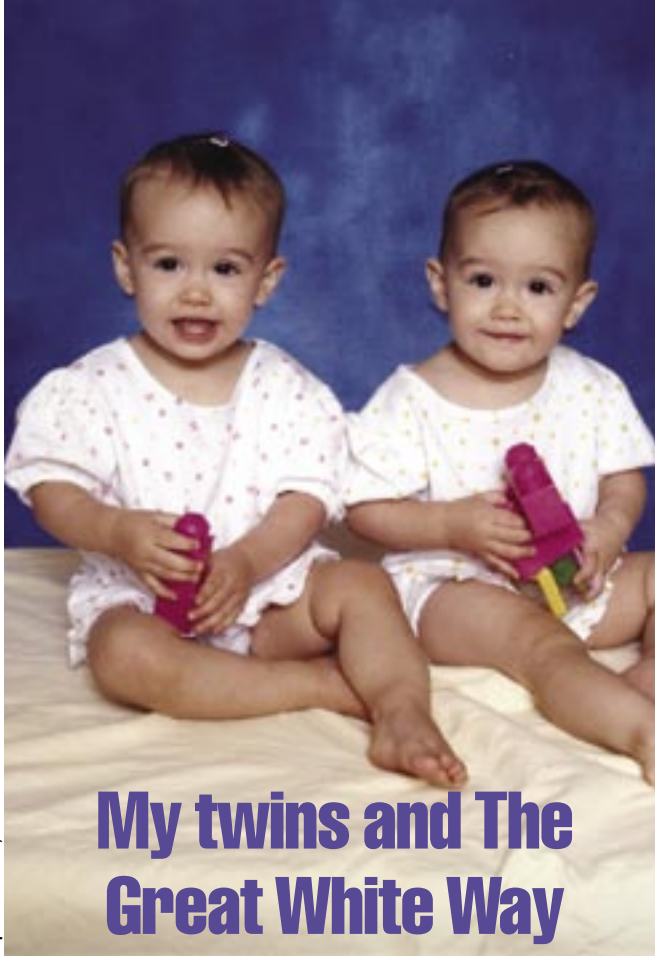
If you are happy with what you've observed, if you have obtained excellent references, and if your mother's instinct says "Yes!" you are in a position to offer the candidate a trial run. Set up a time for

your caregiver to spend about four hours during the day with you and your kids and see how it goes. Run some errands and be sure to pop in and out unexpectedly. Spend some time observing the candidate and her interactions with your multiples. Although it's tempting to take charge, try to stay back and let her do her thing. How else will you know if she can manage a double feed?

If everything goes as you hoped, you are ready to offer her the position. Write up a formal offer outlining your expectations and mutual agreements. This will leave no room for confusion and will provide you with something to go back to if questions arise about expectations or duties. You'll quickly learn the key to making this unique employer/employee relationship work is constant communication.

Some websites provide free templates for interviewing and reference checking for in-home providers: [www.4everythingnanny.com](http://www.4everythingnanny.com) (or [www.4nanny.com](http://www.4nanny.com)), and [www.nannynetwork.com](http://www.nannynetwork.com). The International Nanny Association offers tremendous information including a list of member agencies and a national nanny salary survey for parents to review. ♥

Michelle LaRowe lives on the East Coast with the fourth family in which she's helped care for twins. She is author of two *Nanny To the Rescue!* books and was named 2004 Nanny of the year by her peers.



## My twins and The Great White Way

By Rachel Bondi

**W**hen you have twins and they're beautiful, you speculate about whether they have what it takes to become models or movie stars. Or maybe, both.

I sent a photo of my gorgeous daughters to a talent agent who manages hundreds of infants and toddlers. He warned me 18 months is "an awkward age" for children, almost never requested by casting directors.

But in our case, lightning struck—my girls were cast from their photo alone. (By the way, if you have a decent photo, don't bother with an expensive photographer. The picture you see here is the one I sent to the agent. I've taken the girls to a few auditions, also, but they've never gotten any work from their auditions.)

Much to my surprise, they were to appear on the TV series finale of "Will & Grace" in 2006 as Grace's daughter—not because they had great acting potential or were unusually photogenic, but because their hair color resembled that of Debra Messing, star of the show.

Suddenly, my world was awlirl. Could I obtain their work permits, Social Security numbers, and set up individual bank accounts for them within 24 hours? Could I disrupt our whole family and report to Los Angeles on short notice for four days of shooting?

Well, I ask you, is the Pope Catholic? Like any good stage mother, I swung into action.

In hindsight, it was an interesting exercise. I learned some important lessons in the process. When TWINS Magazine asked me to share my insights, I gladly agreed.

### Lesson #1: Dues to pay with little return

Getting your kids into the entertainment biz requires a lot of work. One appearance doesn't pay enough to cover initial expenses, that's for sure. I spent more money on gas driving five hours round trip to LA, making multiple stops along the way to toss out diapers, change clothes and wipe down the car following many bouts of spilled orange juice than we received for their four days of "acting," after taxes and fees.

There were added costs, as well. Three working adults each took four days off from their jobs to help us on the set. Plus, we paid a sitter to watch my other two not-so-famous children who stayed home.

### Lesson #2: Their show, their rules

Hollywood's MO is a lot of "Hurry up and wait." It's all about the production's needs, not yours. Rushing toddlers to the set for check-in, then entertaining them for hours on end while waiting for their moment in the limelight was both hilarious and tragic. A no-win combination. We timed my girls' naps as best we could, schlepped snacks and wipes, prayed a lot and watched hours of "The Wiggles" on our portable DVD player. We knew not to expect anything would be provided or prepared for us, even though Will & Grace is, in the scheme of Hollywood shows, a "high-end" production.

### Lesson #3: Luck, then talent

On set, the girls loved working and nailed their scenes, but were considered more like "living props" than actors or talent. They were thrilled with attention from the crew, the actors and the live audience. They thrived on getting out of the house every day and playing dress-up. But in reality, one was traded out for the other simply to move the show's plot forward. When they spoke, their words were cut. Their names never appeared in the credits. But does that matter? After all, Harry Connick, Jr., held them!

(Another set of toddler twins playing Will's son had such a hard time coping that shooting has to be extended by a day; finally, their crying was incorporated into the scene. Typical for kids under 2.)

### Lesson #4: Memories are golden

My goal was to get my girls into at least one episode of something that I could show them later in life when they ask me, "Mom, why didn't you try to make us famous?" Now I can hand them their series finale DVD, show them a clip of the blurb that appeared in *The Hollywood Reporter*, cite a mention of them on the Olsen Twins' website, and frame the copy of this article from TWINS. It was a kick. ♡

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Rachel Bondi is a wife and mother of four, including 2½-year-old identical girls, Sophia and Elana. A writer and entrepreneur, Rachel lives in Orange County, Calif., and founded Earning Power (<http://www.earningpower.org>), a Web-based company and online community designed to connect men and women and break through barriers to equality in the workplace. Her first book, to be published this year, is *The Wealth Gap: Eight Unique Barriers to Women's Wealth and How to Overcome Them*.

# Quadruplets, one fence removed

By Arlena de Bruin

"Get out!" Jackie throws her head back, pounds a fist on the fencepost and gives me a one-eyebrow stare. "They didn't!"

"... THEY DID!"

"You caught your twins sticking their fingers where?" She doubles over in the position of perfect awareness, laughing so hard I pray she has adequate bladder control.

She is the only woman I've met who truly understands me. (And being the mother of 8-year-old twin boys, believe me, that's a stretch!) Jackie... my new next door neighbor... mother of twin 7-year-old boys.

I step back, chuckling to myself. After eight years of feeling like a crazy lady, my chaos is finally validated. Insanity has found company.

"You think that's bad," I squeal and then take a deep breath, "I never thought I'd recover from the nursing days. Holy misery! I remember trying to pin a twin under each arm like a football..." I cover my chest and lean in for more emphasis.

"I know! You feel like a dog being mauled by a litter of puppies!"

"Exactly! Eden would push his feet against the back of the couch and try to lunge for a grab of Indi's cheek or nose or ear..."

"I hear ya!" She breaks off in a giggle. "Sure sign it's time to close the café, eh?!"

"You got it! It's one thing to commit to being a food source, but when you have to be bouncer and referee at the buffet table...?!" I throw up my hands...

Humans make the strongest connections with those we best relate to. And talking to another twin mom is as good as it gets. For the past year our four boys have been inseparable...like quadruplets, one fence removed.

Jackie puts down her trowel and looks at me wide-eyed. Our senses tingle in unison. "It's too quiet, right?"

"Uh-huh." She nods toward the backyard. I peek over the gate and catch my Indi in mid-stride, shovel balanced precariously in front of him.

"I found more! I found more! I found more!" he sings wildly.

Mitchell, Curtis and Eden are like a coven of witches, peering into a hole the dog's dug under the cherry tree. Eden has the hose, Curtis is stirring with a stick, Mitchell's throwing in clumps of grass and they're all chanting, "Poo-stew, Poo-stew, Poo-stew!"

"Get out!" I throw my head back, pound a fist on the fencepost and give Jackie the one-eyebrow stare. "They didn't!"

"... THEY DID!" ♥

Arlena deBruin lives in Canada and writes a weekly column about children and families. She takes a joyfully cheeky look at life and relationships, finding laughter in even the most mundane experiences. She has a 16-year-old stepdaughter and twin 8-year-old sons and says, "If you don't think that's a recipe for therapy, then you haven't lived in a house with three boys and a teenager!" Arlena's philosophy: Life is comedy in motion... there's never a disaster you can't find humor in!

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# TWINS™ Bookshelf Spotlight

NEW!



Guess Who Needs Glasses? Bumpy and Boo Visit the Eye Doctor

by Sheri Manson

\$15.95

Twin brothers Bumpy and Boo delight in confusing adults. They dress alike, talk alike and look alike. In the bathtub, even their parents mix them up! At school one day, teacher Miss Hannah and Bumpy and Boo's mother take the class on a field trip to the eye doctor. Dr. Grant gives each of the boys an eye examination, where he discovers that one needs to wear eyeglasses. Will this mean the twins aren't identical? Will the sudden clarity of vision for one boy break the closeness of twinning? This is a lavishly illustrated, entertaining book for young school age twin children who may be facing similar events in their lives where one child is different than the other. *Hardbound, 32 pages.*

NEW!



Twice the Love: Stories of Inspiration for Families...with Twins, Multiples and Singletons

Compiled Edited by Susan M. Heim  
Cartoon artistry by John M. Byrne

\$13.95

"Twice the Love: Stories of Inspiration for Families ... with Twins, Multiples, and Singletons," published in conjunction with TWINS™ Magazine, is a compilation of 82 inspiring stories written by parents and other family members about the joys and challenges of raising multiples. These true tales reflect a variety of topics, such as the special bond between multiples, typical crazy days in the life of a family with twins, challenges encountered in pregnancy or childhood, humorous situations created by multiples, adopting twins, and much more. If you're the parent of twins or triplets, you'll love these heart-warming and encouraging stories. This book also makes a great gift for those who are expecting or raising multiples! *Paperback, 222 pages.*

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to see more books and detailed descriptions.  
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# Protecting your twin-kiddos from serious infections:

## What you may not know

By Marsha Pike

**Q**uiz for the day: What do all the following items have in common? Lettuce, swimming pools, sprouts, cattle farms, vegetables, petting zoos, unpasteurized milk/juice, flowing creeks and streams.

**A**ll can cause *Escherichia coli* (or *E.coli*) contamination. Most people have heard of *E.coli* and immediately think of undercooked ground beef. Or fresh spinach. Within the last five years, there has been an increase in *E.coli* contamination in fresh produce. Just recently, the huge scare about contaminated bagged spinach out of California's fields forced fresh spinach off supermarket shelves nationwide. Even now, we think twice before grabbing that bag of delicious, nutritious baby spinach off the rack.

Symptoms of *E.coli* can begin hours or even days after someone is infected. And *E.coli* is highly contagious. For these reasons the exact cause of *E.coli* contamination is difficult to pinpoint.

I knew about *E. coli*, but had never heard of Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome (HUS), which is caused by *E.coli* infection. But then, my 2½-year-old son (one of triplets) was diagnosed with it in June, 2005. And he nearly died.

HUS, it turns out, is a common cause of sudden, short-term kidney failure in children. HUS is a secondary infection caused by *E.coli*. There are 2 types of HUS: diarrheal (most common) and non-diarrheal. HUS develops when bacteria lodges in the digestive system and toxins enter the bloodstream to destroy red blood cells.

Symptoms of HUS include stomach cramps, diarrhea (usually bloody), vomiting, exhaustion, pale skin color, irritability, and decreased urine output. Although most children recover from HUS without permanent damage, severe cases may require dialysis. In 3% to 5% of children, it is fatal. And it scared us to death.

After only a few days into my son's one-month hospitalization, he required a transfusion and had two grand mal tonic-clonic (full body) seizures lasting over two hours each. The first seizure caused a stroke, as evidenced by an MRI that showed a small red-cell mass in his occipital lobe.

My darling son spent the next 1½ weeks in the ICU, being intubated (a breathing tube) and heavily medicated. We learned then that 1 in 5 patients with HUS develops neurological problems. In our son's case, the stroke took all of the doctors by surprise—my son's kidney function was improving at that point.

We are extremely fortunate that in our case, my son does not have any ongoing medical issues after all was said and done. Nonetheless, the doctors thought he could have possible motor issues with the left side of his body as a result of the stroke.

*E.coli*, we learned in the course of this frightening experience, is highly contagious. Our family was so lucky that neither of our

## 9 Everyday Tips for Food Safety

- Wash hands with soap before handling any food
- Wash fresh fruits and vegetables under running water
- Scrub fruits w/ rinds/skins with a brush + soapy water before cutting
- Refrigerate perishables quickly (bacteria grows at room temperature)
- Cook all meats thoroughly (to internal temperature of 160 degrees Fahrenheit for ground beef). Rare meat is NOT good for children!
- Have separate cutting boards for chicken and all other foods—a must. Raw poultry contains bacteria that can contaminate fruits, breads, vegetables and other foods.
- Wiping off a cutting board with a damp sponge or rag is inadequate to remove bacteria after cutting poultry or any other food that might contain *E.coli*. Use soap and water, or a Clorox disinfectant rag (keep a cylinder of the disposable Clorox rags handy in your kitchen).
- When preparing a meal, use separate utensils for cooking different foods, especially when meats are on the menu. Serve cooked meats on a clean plate—never on the one used for raw meat.
- Pack a cooler for a picnic with uncooked meats on the bottom (with plenty of ice) and place other foods and veggies on top.

## Wash fresh fruits & vegetables thoroughly

This includes everything—even items that supposedly already been washed (for example: bagged lettuce and spinach).

—Last year, an outbreak of *E.coli* O157 (the most common type) contaminated people across three states. Bagged salad was suspected—lettuce has become a major culprit (behind ground beef) of *E.coli* infections.

—Wash all vegetables under running water—avoid putting lettuce, spinach or veggies in a bowl of water to rinse them. *E.coli* can contaminate all vegetables in a bowl of still water.

—For fruits with rinds or with peels that are edible, use a brush to scrub the outsides, then rinse thoroughly, before cutting into them.

other boys (nor my husband nor I) ended up hospitalized with HUS, too. My boys were unable to attend daycare for one month until they were no longer considered contagious, however.

We have no idea how our boys contracted *E.coli*. The health department in our community had no other incidences of *E.coli* or HUS at the same time. But every mother of twins and triplets can understand why I am far more vigilant (some might say anal!) now, than I was before, with hand washing and food preparation. ♥

---

Marsha Pike lives in Broomfield, Colo.

## Resources:

**For more information on *E.coli* and HUS, visit:**

Center for Disease Control: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

American Society of Pediatric Nephrology: [www.aspneph.com](http://www.aspneph.com)

National Kidney Foundation: [www.kidney.org](http://www.kidney.org)

The American Society of Pediatric Nephrology maintains a fund for education and research into HUS: American Society of Pediatric Nephrology HUS Fund  
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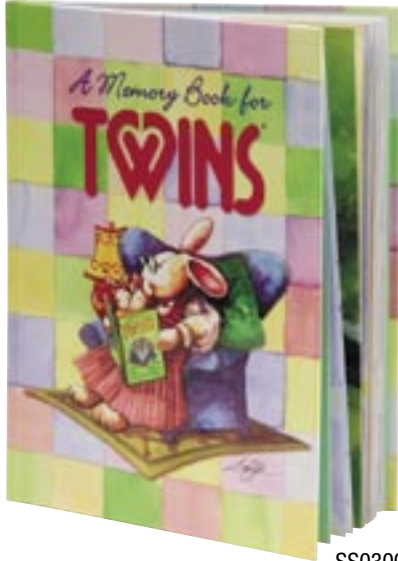
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ful gifts to celebrate the birth of your twins for a close family member or even for yourself. Frames are individually boxed. Twice as Nice Stars and Hearts Frame is 4½" x 6" and holds two 1¾" x 2¾" photographs.

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*Be sure to include personalization information on the order form or when you order by phone.*

To place an order, call (888) 55-TWINS, go online or use the order form in this issue.

## Transitional objects: Snugglies



Brannin and Carrie, 2 years

If you are one of the many parents struggling to help your twins learn to fall asleep on their own, in their own beds, try introducing a transitional object. After 4 months of age, developmentally healthy babies can learn to fall asleep on their own, without being rocked or cuddled to sleep. Security objects—a small stuffed animal or baby-nite-nite blanket—provides comfort to your twin infant, which encourages falling asleep alone. Pick an object your twin infant has shown interest in and make a big deal about it. Incorporate the Teddy or blankie into cuddle-time and be sure to tuck him in next to your twin infant. When choosing an object be sure to consider size as compared to your baby—they will share a bed. Babies especially love a toy or blanket that has satin-edge trim. Little fingers love to stroke soft and silky edges while falling asleep or after awakening.

## Ear infection? Wait and see...

Have you heard the recent buzz about overuse of antibiotics in kids? Are you concerned your twins receive too many antibiotics and how this may affect their health? So is the American Academy of Pediatrics.

In an effort to curtail overuse of antibiotics, a new trend is taking hold in the treatment of middle ear infections (acute otitis media). It's called "watchful waiting." Fully 80% of middle ear infections clear up without use of antibiotics. Instead, kids are offered pain medicine and ear-numbing drops. Then

## Fish— healthy, but go easy on it!



Serve fish and seafood to your twin kiddos early and fairly often—get them into the habit of eating new things and enjoying foods other than mac & cheese or red meats. But, mercury found in many fish and sea creatures can be dangerous to infants and toddlers. But because fish and seafood contains high quality protein, heart-healthy Omega-3 fats, brain-healthy DHA and other nutrients, don't eliminate them from your diet. Instead, when selecting fish for nursing mothers and when preparing meals for your toddlers:

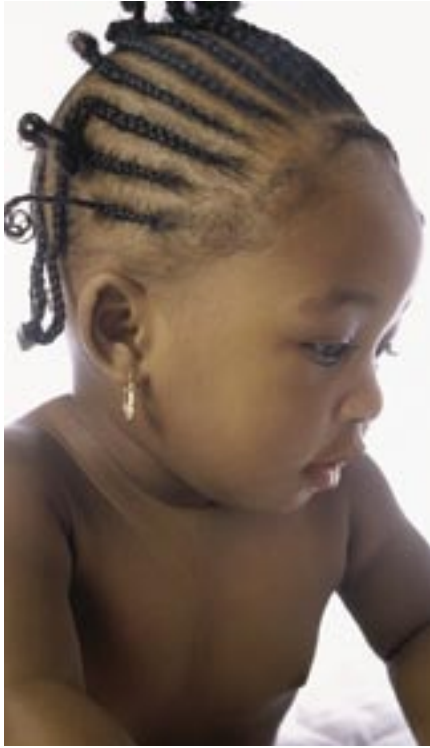
- Limit fish meals to 12 oz. per person per week of low-mercury fish or shellfish—shrimp, canned light tuna, salmon, pollock, cod, halibut, tilapia and catfish (for children, that's a lot!)
- Wild salmon is the best in Omega-3s—somewhat better for you than farm-raised, but also more expensive
- Avoid purchasing shark, swordfish, king mackerel or tilefish entirely
- Purchase "canned light tuna" packed in water rather than albacore tuna—albacore tends to contain more mercury (if you eat albacore tuna, limit each child's intake to 6 oz. a week)
- Local "lake" fish can be high in mercury, depending on where you live—limit intake of local fish to 6 oz. a week unless otherwise informed

they're monitored for signs of persist infection. At times parents are given an antibiotic prescription but are asked to wait several days before filling it. See if the infection will clear on its own.

The next time you suspect an ear infection and take your twins to the pediatrician, don't insist on antibiotics as a first line of defense. Ask about watchful waiting and try some drops instead.







## What is eczema, anyway?

Eczema is a chronic skin condition that typically appears during infancy as a dry rash on the cheeks. Children inherit sensitive skin and may also have allergies and asthma. An eczema rash is extremely dry, rough skin that is red and itchy, appears raw and becomes weepy if scratched. It is commonly found on babies' cheeks, elbows, wrists, and backs of knees, but may be seen elsewhere. Eczema often persists through adolescence, sometimes into adulthood.

An "eczema flare-up" can be prevented by using lubricating cream to trap moisture in the skin. Lotions that may work well are Keri, Lubriderm, Nivea, or Cetaphil, to dampen skin twice daily. Avoid ointments or petroleum jelly, which can worsen the condition. For severe eczema flare-ups, prescription steroidal and non-steroidal creams may be needed, plus oral antihistamines.

If you suspect your twins have eczema, have them evaluated and treated by your pediatrician.

## Monsters under your bed

**W**hen I was growing up, one of my worst terrors was that there were monsters under my bed. I had an older brother who fed this fear every chance he got. Even today, as an adult with children of my own, I can recall sleepless nights and amazingly long jumps from my bedroom door to the bed of my childhood.

When I found myself raising twin boys by myself, my main focus was their safety. With two older children, many fears most new moms experience didn't weigh heavily on me, but a different one really did: how to help my twins feel as safe with only one parent around.

While shopping one day, when my sons were 18 months old, I came across some horribly ugly stuffed monsters covered with hideous colored fur. They had warts, horns and big icky teeth. I found them adorable. I picked up two color-coordinated monsters and tucked them away for Christmas. At the time, my thinking was that these were great boy-toys that would bring "male" energy into a home filled with two older sisters and a mom. However, the real purpose these monsters served didn't emerge until much later.

Christmas morning came. When these ghastly things were unwrapped and growled at the babies, they giggled and hugged them tight. The monsters were a big hit and became the boys' favorite toys. As days and weeks passed, growling could be heard from all over the house; the boys carried their monsters everywhere.

A few months later, I tucked my twins into their cribs, stroking each little cheek as I did every night, saying, "Mommy loves you." I handed a monster to each boy, and as I walked out of their room to the sounds of growling, something pretty neat occurred to me.

Soon, my sons would be entering a phase most children go through: Monsters under the bed! My boys were going to bed with their monsters. Maybe I was inadvertently helping to sidestep the monster-phase. Maybe these horribly ugly monsters would take the fear of monsters under my boys' beds away entirely (which it did!).

How lucky children are to be able to "hug their fears" to them. Wouldn't it be nice to do that as adults? For instance, if we fear loneliness, wouldn't it be wonderful if we could learn to embrace the time we have alone? Turn our own monsters into security blankets? If a child can do it, why can't we?

There is so much we can re-learn from our children. For example, pay attention to the little things we can so easily miss. One day my sons saw a bird taking a dirt bath and they both stopped what they were doing to watch. I did, too. How comical this silly bird was rolling and flapping, raising a small cloud of dust. Then I noticed how pretty the dandelion fluff was, floating on the breeze, and the smell of lilacs behind me. My whole day took a different direction and became a day of appreciation, instead of chaos.

—Sky Warnke

## From crib to bed:

*Moving twins to 'big-kid' beds can be easy*

For Janesville, Wis., resident Paula Ciebell, mother of 5-year-old ID twins, Trevor and Justin, deciding on children's beds was doubly challenging.

"We took buying beds almost too seriously," Paula said. "It turned out to be a huge thing for our kids. We never switched to toddler beds because I didn't want to let them get out of bed alone at a young age. I must have missed the optimum time for doing it, though,



Lucas and Max, 3 years

because then they refused to move. They wouldn't give up their cribs."

As the boys' 4th birthday approached, Paula and her husband, Tony, tried easing them towards getting "big-boy" beds by going shopping. "They still refused, however, and they did not get big beds until the Christmas after they turned 4," Paula said.

Experts at [keepkidshealthy.com](http://keepkidshealthy.com), a pediatrician's guide to children's health and safety, said moving children to a big bed can be stressful for many toddlers, citing the process "as a significant milestone in their development." Involving the children in picking out their new beds and bedding is one way to ease the transition. Paula and her family did just that.

"The kids loved being a part of the shopping experience," Paula said. "After shopping at many, many stores, they discovered Verlo Mattress Factory stores to be their favorite place. They loved that the factory was attached, and were excited to have beds made just for them."

Verlo's custom-crafted beds fit the family's budget as well as the boys' active lifestyles. "These beds are very durable," Paula said. "The boys flopped around on the demo beds and were happy to pick out their own."

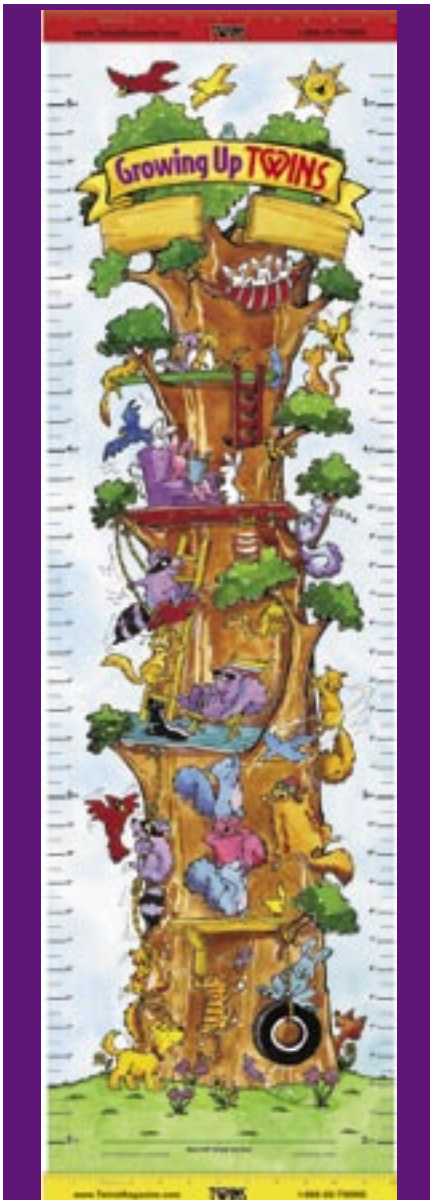
The Ciebell household is sleeping peacefully these days. "We never had a restless night with the transition. It was wonderful!"

Paula added that the monumental moment of buying new beds sticks with them.

"The boys still love driving past the local Verlo store and pointing out every Verlo truck on the road," Paula said. "They also love to relay the story to all their friends, especially the young ones who are still in a crib or toddler bed."

Try these tips to bring sweet slumber to your household:

- ✓ Put each child's new bed in the room for a few weeks or months to help them get used to big beds.



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Actual size: 40" x 12"

- ✓ Start each child's bedtime routine in the new big beds. If one or both twins want to go into their cribs, move them when the child is finally ready to go to sleep.
- ✓ Let each child take daytime naps in their new beds.
- ✓ Transfer as many objects from each child's crib to the new big beds, and use the books, toys, animals or blankets in the new beds as part of each child's bedtime routine.
- ✓ Let each twin sleep on his/her crib mattress on the floor for a few nights.
- ✓ Move the new beds into the spots in the room where the cribs had been.

—Julie Henningfield

## Pacifier clips

Sick and tired of picking pacifiers up off dirty floors, at home and when you're out and about? Here's a creative alternative to pricey pacifier clips that will keep germs off the binky and save your back: Visit your local sports store and buy 8 small carabiner clips—usually sold as keychains or hooks for water bottles. They resemble the letter 'D'. Using ribbon or string, make 6-inch braided ropes and attach a clip at each end. Attach one hook to your twin infant and the other to your baby's binky. You've got yourself safe, personalized, inexpensive pacifier clips! Make two—or more—for each twin infant and color-coordinate your ribbons to individualize them! For safety, make braided ropes no longer than 6 inches. Keeping the fastener short ensures they can't wrap around a little neck or limb.

“The national birth rate for multiples rose 28% between 1990 and 1998 to 29 births per 1000. The rate rose still more to 33 births per 1000 in 2003.”

Send your **Growing Stages questions** to mom of twins Kelly Woods at [kwoods@lightblast.net](mailto:kwoods@lightblast.net). Kelly is a pediatric and family nurse-practitioner who works in a pediatrician's office providing primary care. In each issue, she addresses topics of interest to parents of multiples. Kelly has identical boys, Aidan and Bailey, 2 years. Kelly and her husband, Matt, live in central Minnesota.

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⇄ Peek-a-boo! ⇄⇄



# Double Takes

Boy/girl twins are (almost) always dizygotic (DZ, "fraternal"). Can you guess whether the same-sex multiples pictured on these pages are monozygotic (MZ, "identical") or dizygotic?

**1::** Jessica and Alex  
8 months  
Toms River, NJ



**2::** Amanda and Alyssa  
1 year  
Richmond, VA



**3::** Kami and Chrisly  
6 months  
Trinidad, CO



**4::** Morgan and Taylor  
3 years  
Moncks Corner, SC



**5::** Blake and Ian  
2 years  
Potomac Falls, VA



**6::** Max and Sam  
12 months  
West Bend, IA



**7::** Mason and McKenna  
8½ months  
Waukesha, WI



**8::** Marissa and Madeline  
7 months  
Orlando, FL



**9::** Megan and Madison  
7 months  
Landsdale, PA



**10::** Paityn and Colton  
5 months  
Castleton, VT



**11::** Logan and Jillian  
4 months  
Chesapeake, VA



**12::** Luke and Madeline  
3½ years  
Lochport, IL



**13::** Julia and Charles  
6 months  
Chicago, IL



**14::** Shelby and Kylie  
2½ years  
Algona, IA



**15::** Ava and Isabella  
20 months  
Dix Hills, NY



**16::** Matthew and Megan  
7 months  
Reno, NV



**17::** Kate and Elizabeth  
10 months  
Fulton, MS



**18::** Elizabeth and Katherine  
16 months  
Orange, CA



**19::** Christopher and Tristan  
4 years  
Kansas City, MO



**20::** Jadon and Josef  
6 months  
Austin, TX

### Photo Tips

*What we are looking for:*

- Sharp focus
- Crisp, clean, vivid color (no red, blue or yellow cast)
- Good, attractive lighting (no high shadow contrasts, no "red eye")
- Uncluttered backgrounds
- Happy children interacting with each other

We select photos for an upcoming issue three months prior to its distribution. Because of the volume of photos received, we are unable to respond individually. If your photo is selected and you have not included a release form with it you will be contacted to sign a photo release. **See Release Form on page 53 of this issue.**

**Please be sure to:**

- Place your address label on the back of the photo (or write softly with permanent ink pen) along with a phone number.
- Include the names of the children, their age in the photo and their twin type (dizygotic, monozygotic or unknown).

**Send your twins' photograph to:**

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Attn. Art Director  
11211 E. Arapahoe Road, Suite 101  
Centennial, CO 80112-3851

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ZD - 12	ZD - 11	ZD - 10	ZD - 9
ZD - 8	ZD - 7	ZD - 6	ZD - 5
ZD - 4	ZD - 3	ZD - 2	ZD - 1

*Based on parental reports:*

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NOTE: We are unable to use any professional photographs. Photos will not be returned. All photos become the property of TWINS.

## The unexpected joys of raising twin boys

While expecting my second child, I hoped for another girl. My 5-year-old, Nina, had a winning disposition and an affinity for unicorns, nail polish, and tiaras. She pined for a sister, and I seconded the notion. Boys seemed too messy, noisy, distractible. Plus, sisters could share a bedroom, enabling us to stay in our small home indefinitely. Even my husband was on our side.

Naturally we were eager to learn the baby's gender at my 18-week ultrasound. Nina came along—we hoped her excitement about the images would help offset any gender disappointment. When the screen revealed not one, but two bouncing boys, Nina—surprisingly stoic—witnessed my anguished wails of protest.

For weeks I was inconsolable. How would I endure two boys' wrestling matches, burping contests, and inevitable obsessions with superheroes, sports, and race cars? How would we afford a home large enough for them and their bug collections?

Friends were little help. One, a mom of twin girls, was sympathetic: "Wow, I thought I had it tough," she said. I sobbed that I was the wrong sort of mom to raise two sons. Another friend, thinking a moment, said, "You're right—you are the wrong person."

By the 39th week I wished only for a safe delivery; I didn't care what actually emerged. But when the boys arrived, I was immediately taken aback. The first, Graham, snuggled contentedly into my shoulder before I could even open my gown to nurse him. Later, he complained from his bassinet until I picked him up, and he again nestled into me, yawning. Frankly, I hadn't figured a baby boy would be so cuddly.

That early experience gave me hope for a future brighter than the one I'd anticipated. Admittedly, over the years some of my worst fears have been borne out. Now 7, my boys are so loud that their sincerest attempts at



Graham and Ian Crystal, age 4 in this picture, challenged all the stereotypes of boys from the start.

a whisper can be heard across a crowded restaurant. They're so fidgety that even while immersed in a favorite book or DVD they perform back flips off the couch. Their rambunctiousness has yielded a broken leg, sprained arm, split brow, black eye, fall from a shopping cart, and several tumbles down a lengthy flight of stairs.

Yet Graham and Ian have challenged many of my assumptions about boys. When Nina understandably denied them access to her Victorian dollhouse, at age 4 they asked Santa for a dollhouse of their own—and when he delivered a contemporary model with a ringing doorbell, phone, and oven-timer, it became a favorite of all three kids. Nina decorated, while the boys staged the dollhouse people's escape from bad guys.

The boys went through their Superhero phase, donning capes and utility belts in public, much to the embarrassment of their preteen sister. But even she laughed the day we spied two plastic action figures, Spider-Man and Batman, seated at the dollhouse dining table, teacups at the ready.

To my surprise—and despite my husband's best efforts—Ian and Graham still shun sports. To them, a homerun is what

the fans do when leaving the ballpark. By the end of the winter Olympics they still didn't know a ski from a skate. Ironically, their indifference may have helped inspire my daughter to prove herself the family athlete: The prim little girl who used to refuse going barefoot is now a competitive rock climber.

Graham and Ian, on the other hand, have found their calling in the arts. One scratches beats on a DJ mixer while his brother plays keyboard. They rehearse together for roles in a junior theater group. Karaoke is a blast with an audience of at least one. Who would have thought my daughter's sequin-studded dress-up clothes would make such excellent rock-star duds?

The biggest surprise has been my boys' emotional lives. Though they resort to the occasional shove, they have proffered many more hugs and tears of compassion. "It's okay, bud," one says softly when the other receives a poor grade or parental discipline. Competitive games are strictly avoided, as the winner is unable to enjoy his triumph in the shadow of his brother's disappointment. And even the smallest treat is automatically shared, with the boys trading bites on a single leftover peanut-butter cup.

I've learned young boys are capable of intimacy I thought was innate only to girls. Their twinship allows them to express emotions like tenderness and empathy many other boys seem to suppress early on. I fervently hope they remain close for life, and that their unique bond helps them grow into exceptional men. I wish more boys could experience the benefits of twinship—and more families could enjoy homes as noisy and richly blessed as ours. ♥

Lisa Crystal and her husband live in Newark, Calif. Several of her essays will appear in *It's Twins! Parent-to-Parent Advice from Infancy Through Adolescence*, edited by Susan M. Heim, due out this spring.

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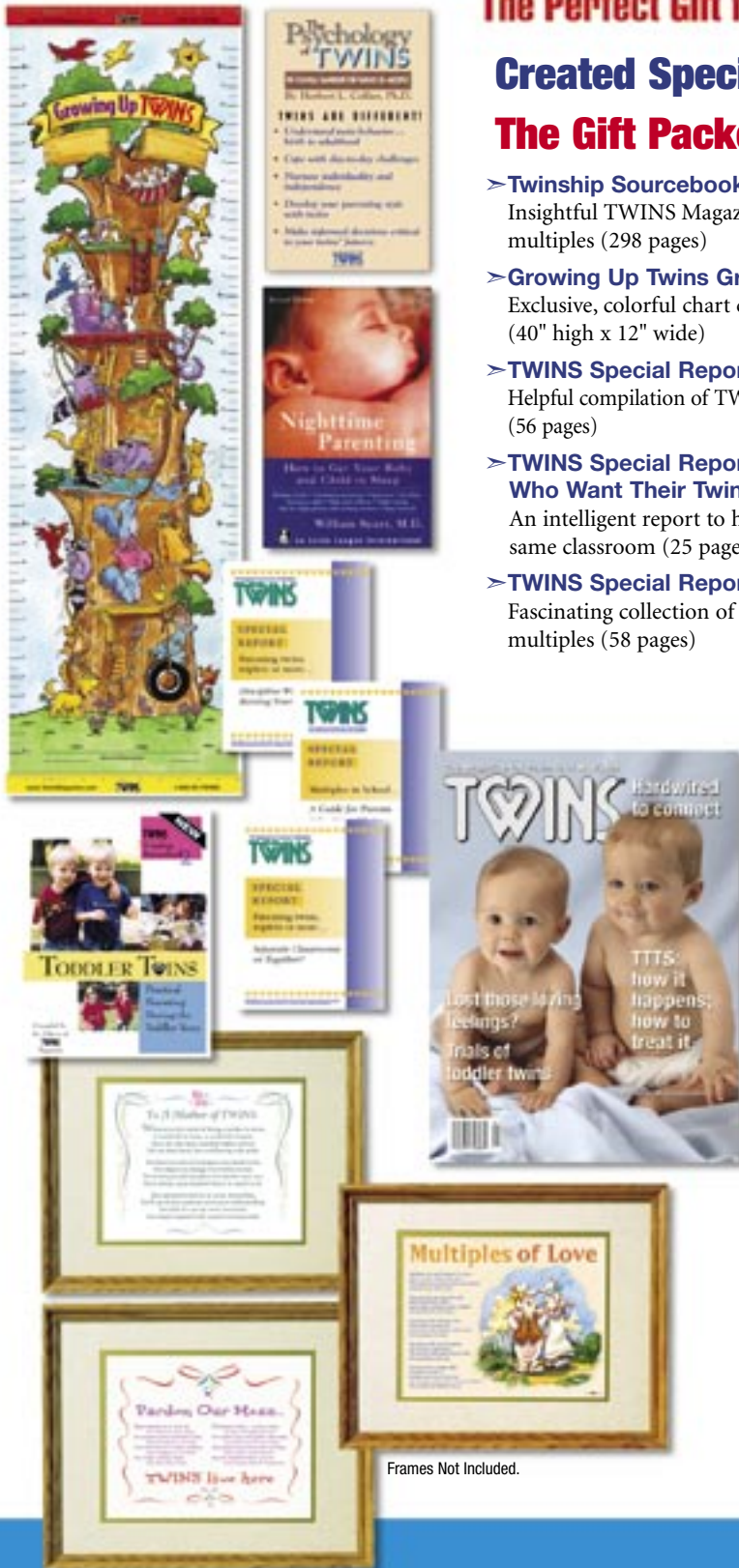
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