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On the Cover:



Identical twins, Shelby and Maggie are 4-years-old and live in Northern Colorado. They both love pillow pets and are looking forward to a super fun Christmas with their mom and dad.



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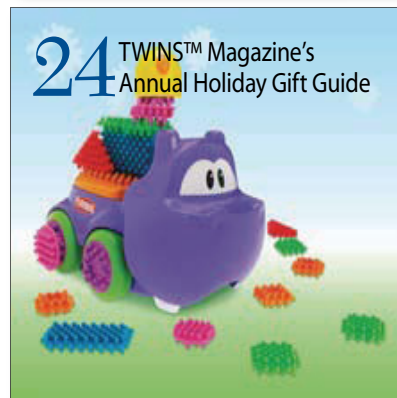
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Avoid the Fair and Equal Trap!

I have always been one of those twin moms that felt like I had to try and be fair and equal. Even when my boys were infants and I would start cuddling and hugging one baby, I would then find myself feeling extremely guilty that I hadn't done the exact same thing with the other one and would feel this overwhelming need to go over and pick him up and show him the exact same affection and attention I just gave his twin. Of course it didn't matter that he was perfectly content and happy in his swing, laughing and smiling without a care in the world and I wasn't even on his little baby radar. It was the pressure and guilt that I was placing on myself to always be fair and equal that made it difficult for me to feel like I was giving them both the same fair and equal treatment.

My fair and equal style of parenting continued as toddlers when, during the holidays, I insisted that they should have the exact same truck because I didn't want them to fight over it and everything in my mind had to be fair and equal. Not to mention that I couldn't bear to hurt their feelings if I actually chose the wrong thing (like giving a truck to one and an action figure to the other) and then this would somehow create a ripple effect of resentment and disappointment that would only end with ongoing therapy sessions as adults!

A few years back, one of my twin boys said to me, "One thing I always hated during the holidays was when people would give us the exact same thing because it would make me feel like they weren't really thinking about me." What great insight coming from a 9-year-old (at the time).

Whoa... stop the presses! What? I was so worried and caught up with keeping everything fair and equal that it never even occurred to me that they really felt this way. As parents of multiples, one of our biggest challenges is to find and nurture each of our children's individual qualities and discover what they are passionate about and then do whatever we can as parents to support them in pursuing their passion!

Over the years, it has gotten much easier for me to find unique gifts that each of my boys will love and enjoy because, after all, they are all four very different, unique boys and are passionate about many different things. So this holiday season, before you go out and buy two of everything to make sure that you are being fair and equal, stop and think about what each child would truly love and don't get caught up in the fair and equal trap like I did. You will find that by doing so, it gives you another great opportunity to get to know and love them even more (is that possible?) and it takes all the pressure off of you to always remain fair and equal. After all, when in life are things really fair and equal anyway? I know by teaching them this lesson early on, it will only give them the strength and tools they need to cope when they do experience unfair situations and inequalities in life.

We hope you enjoy this digital Holiday edition of TWINS™ Magazine filled with lots of great articles and information, including our annual Holiday Gift Guide—Our Top Picks. This interactive digital issue includes direct links to numerous advertisers, products, websites and other resources and you can also make notes, do key word searches and more. We hope you have a wonderful holiday season with your family and we wish you all the very best in the coming year!



Sincerely,

Christa D Reed

Christa D. Reed, Publisher/Editor-in-Chief

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MEET RISING COUNTRY MUSIC STARS

Kate & Kacey Coppola

By Christa D. Reed, Editor-in-Chief

Kate and Kacey Coppola are identical twins from Denver, Colorado who now live in the country music capital of Nashville, Tennessee. At the age of 26, these talented twins love the fact that being a twin means they always have a permanent best friend and since they travel so much it's really nice that they have each other because it never gets lonely for either of them.

Kate and Kacey were born in Des Moines, Iowa on February 18, 1983 and moved to Denver, Colorado when they were three. When growing up and asked what were the most memorable birthdays as twins? Both chimed in, "One of our favorite birthdays was when we turned 10-years-old. We got our first 10-speed bikes from our parents. It was a total surprise and we loved them so much! We loved our matching purple 10-speeds."

When asked what is the worst thing about being a twin? These girls state that there isn't really a "worst" part about being a twin, but sometimes it's hard when they would first meet people and they wouldn't really have a separate identity from each other.

While growing up, Kate and Kacey were in different classrooms all the way up until high school. Then they had every class together because they both took so many music classes. They have both always loved music and singing. So choir and musicals were their main interests growing up and they did them all together. But there was one year

when they said they were having an identity crisis. "Kate told our mom she didn't want to take voice lessons on the same day as me anymore. She wanted to have separate days and times. Mom was like, 'um, no. I'm driving and we're all going at the same time!' It's so funny to think about that now," says Kacey.

"Kacey and I have never really felt competitive with each other," proclaims Kate. "Of course, we were always auditioning for plays and musicals, but it usually worked out for both of us to participate. We were even double cast as Sandy in our Junior Year production of Grease!"

They have been singing together for as long as they can remember. They even have old home movies from when they were 3-years-old singing, "I'm a Little Tea Pot" and dancing around the living room. "Kacey is twirling and singing half the words, and I am holding a cleaning bottle as a microphone and being very deliberate--nothing has changed," adds Kate.

When asked who happened to be their main musical influences they replied, "We love all kinds of music, but some of our biggest influences are Patty Griffin, Keith Urban, Garth Brooks, The Dixie Chicks, The Eagles, and Mark Cohn... we could go on and on!"

They are currently writing and recording songs for their upcoming album on Big Machine Records. "We have been on tour all year with Little Big Town, Kenny Chesney, and Julianne Hough and we'll be touring again starting after the New Year," says Kacey. Their current single is "Dreaming Love", and the music video for the song has been featured on CMT and GAC. ♡

You can learn more about these rising country music stars, Kate and Kacey Coppola by visiting their website at www.KateandKacey.com and you can also follow them on Twitter at www.twitter.com/kateandkacey and on their my space page at: www.myspace.com/kateandkacey.



TWINS™ Magazine Launches New Digital Magazine...

TWINS™ Magazine is excited to introduce our brand new digital magazine with this special 2009 holiday edition. This new, page-turning, interactive magazine will be produced four times a year in between our seasonal/quarterly printed magazines. "For years, our readers have kept asking us for more issues of TWINS™ Magazine and we listened," says Christa D. Reed, Publisher/Editor-in-Chief. "Now our readers will be able to read all the great articles and information in TWINS™ Magazine 8 times in a year. They will also have access to using all of the brand new, interactive features our digital magazine is offering." Subscribers to the magazine now have a choice to purchase a **Print/Digital Combo** Subscription or a **Digital Only** subscription to TWINS™ Magazine.

TWINS™ Magazine's Extreme Makeover for 2010!

TWINS™ Magazine has undergone an 'Extreme Makeover' starting with this issue! Just in time for the New Year, we are pleased to present our updated, new design! We have a talented and experienced new Art Director, Michelle Kenny, and she has worked very hard to give TWINS™ Magazine a brand new look for the coming year. Michelle has many years of experience in the graphic design field and we are thrilled to welcome her to the TWINS™ Magazine team!

December 7th is World TTTS Awareness Day!

World TTTS Awareness Day is an international mobilization effort created by The Twin to Twin Transfusion Syndrome Foundation to increase awareness of the #1 problem facing multiples. It is crucial for women to get an ultrasound in the first trimester to identify multiples and then to determine whether there is one placenta or two. Women must learn the warning signs of TTTS, the 15 questions to ask at each ultrasound (**see page 37**), and the available treatment options. World TTTS Awareness Day is about empowering parents and is filled with messages of Hope, Help and Encouragement. This day is also a remembrance day for all the babies who have lost their battle with TTTS. Candles will be lit on this night across the world during the vigil and messages may also be left for your babies through lighting online candles. Want more information? Visit <http://www.worldtttsawarenessday.org/> to get involved and to learn more.

Don't Drink the Water at one Pennsylvania College!

That's what everyone is saying at **Clarion University of Pennsylvania** in their athletic department since their Associate Athletic Director, Assistant Swimming Coach and Head Wrestling Coach all have twins and the Assistant Wrestling Coach is expecting their set to arrive sometime early spring.

"We think that this is such a unique occurrence," says Wendy Snodgrass, Associate Athletic Director at the college. "We now all have a running joke on campus that nobody else should drink the water around here because we are having so many sets of twins."

The Assistant Swimming Coach, Christina Sheets and her husband Dave started the trend back in October 2007 when their fraternal twins were born. Then, Head Wrestling Coach Teague Moore and his wife Mary welcomed their fraternal set in July 2009 and Associate Athletic Director, Wendy Snodgrass and husband

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From left to right: Christina Sheets, Assistant Swimming Coach holding Alaina and Dave Sheets, husband holding twin Elizabeth; Wendy Snodgrass, Associate Athletic Director holding Maggie and Jeff Snodgrass, husband holding twin, Callie; Mary Moore, wife holding Madigan and Teague Moore, Head Wrestling Coach holding twin, Maximus; Lydia Bosch, wife expecting fraternal twins in March, 2010 and Ethan Bosch, Assistant Wrestling Coach

Jeff had their twins almost a year ago this December. Now, the Assistant Wrestling Coach, Ethan Bosch and his wife Lydia are expecting fraternal twins this March.

Anxious Pregnant Mothers More Likely to Have Smaller Babies

Pittsburgh, PA—A new study published in the journal *Pediatric and Perinatal Epidemiology* reveals that anxiety in pregnant women impacts their babies' size and gestational age. Specifically, women with more severe and chronic anxiety during pregnancy are more likely to have affected babies. Shahla M. Hosseini, Minhnoi W. Biglan, Cynthia Larkby, Maria M. Brooks, Michael B. Gorin, and Nancy L. Day studied a sample of low-income women, half of whom were African American and the other half Caucasian. The group already had well-known risk factors such as alcohol and cigarette use. The authors demonstrated that the mother's anxiety during pregnancy impacts birth outcomes over and beyond factors such as drug use, education, and race. Anxiety during the third trimester predicted women delivering significantly smaller babies. In the first and second trimesters, the effects of anxiety were significant only among those women who had severe anxiety. Low to moderate levels of anxiety in women during either the first or second trimester did not significantly affect the birth outcomes, but women who are severely anxious during much of their pregnancy should be considered for anxiety-reducing interventions. "One way to prevent health problems in children and adults is to focus care on the prenatal period," the authors note. "It is key to pursue further research which addresses interventions to ameliorate the effects that a woman's trait anxiety has on the development of fetuses."

Check out the new 'Feature Spotlight' on Twins Magazine's Home Page

www.TwinsMagazine.com will now host weekly guest bloggers and other articles in a Feature Spotlight on their homepage to provide users with weekly articles and information about raising twins and multiples. Check back often as articles, topics and guest bloggers will change

weekly and cover a wide variety of topics pertaining to parenting your multiples.

Australian Surgeons Separate Conjoined Twins on November 17, 2009

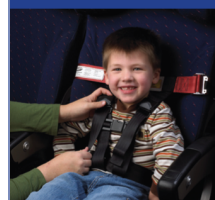
According to the website, <http://www.guardian.co.uk>, a team of 16 surgeons and nurses successfully completed a 25-hour operation to separate conjoined twins in Australia. The female Bangladeshi twins, Trishna and Krishna, had been joined at their heads, sharing blood vessels and brain tissue. They were taken to Australia in 2007 after a charity worker found them in a Bangladeshi orphanage. It is too early to know whether either suffered any brain damage in the operation. Leo Donnan, of the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne, said the girls still faced many hours of reconstructive surgery following the initial operation.

"The teams managed to separate their brains and they are both very well," he said. "Now we have the long task of the reconstructive surgery, which will go on for many hours." Plastic surgeons used a combination of the girls' skin, bone grafts and artificial materials to finish reconstructing their skulls around five hours after the separation surgery ended. "Their bodies have to recover from this, and we've got a lot of unknown territory we're moving into," Donnan added. "All I can say is that everything is in place for the best possible outcome. The main thing is that the girls are healthy." The Children First Foundation said the girls' parents had put them in an orphanage as they were unable to care for them. The charity brought the children to Australia after doctors in Bangladesh, who were unable to conduct the separation surgery, requested help. "We are delighted and relieved that the girls have now been successfully separated," the foundation said in a statement. "Both girls are physically stable, and we now await the completion of

the next stage of their surgery. The girls will be in intensive care for some days." Before the surgery, doctors had said there were a 50% chance that the girls could suffer brain damage and a 25% chance that one would die. Ian McKenzie, a member of the surgical team, said the girls were improving as their bodies began to work individually. "The twins are actually in better condition because the degree of separation has increased, and this problem we've had with their circulation affecting each other has actually got less," he added.



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Dear TWINS™ Magazine:

I wanted to know if you had ever heard of other identical twins, who each gave birth to identical twins? I'm still very curious so I thought I would write to you and see if any other readers out there knew of any other identical twins having twins? My sister and I have been searching for information on this, but haven't found anything. Thought I would forward the most recent picture of us. My sister's name

is Jenn Gruner, her boys are Finn and Van and my girls are Georgia and Quinn. We would love to hear from



other identical twins that also have twins to connect with others in our situation. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Christian Fernandes, Via email

Editor's Note: *Hi Christian, I'm not exactly sure how many of our readers are identical twins that also had twins themselves! If there are any of you out there, please contact TWINS™ Magazine so we can make a connection for you!*

Dear Ms. Reed,

My name is Cherie Brewer. My husband and I have quintuplets (2 boys, 2 girls and an angel boy). Our children are in preschool in the public school system and still receiving speech and occupational therapy. I have been googling information on separating multiples in school and found your website. Our children have always been together (2 years of Preschool) and now after moving from Alabama to North Carolina they have separated our children into 2 schools and 3 different teachers. Two of our children have the same teacher but on different days. I am also driving 20 minutes one way and there is a school 1.5 miles from our home. One of our daughters is showing physical signs of stress (biting her lips, fidgeting with hands). Our pediatrician diagnosed her with Severe Situational Anxiety. The school will not speak with me about this for a week (until our IEP meeting).



Our pediatrician advised us to take her out of school until they fix this by putting her with a sibling and if she shows anymore signs she is recommending counseling. Do you have any advice on what we can do? My child cries almost 24 hours before school and her teacher tells me how nervous my daughter is at school. They are acting like they won't work with us. The county has not ever had a set of multiples of our magnitude. Any help and/or advice will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,
Cherie Brewer, Via email

Editor's Note: *I am very sorry for what you are going through and I imagine that your school and district probably doesn't have a lot of guidance and direction on what to do in your case. I hope your IEP meeting went well and you were able to resolve some of these issues? It is my firm belief that as a parent YOU have the absolute right to request that your children be placed together and that is why several states are already passing*

Mailbox continued on page 35

We want to hear from you!



Send us your comments, suggestions, questions about raising multiples or if you need advice


on a pressing subject or any other information you want to share with us and your letter/email may be included in an upcoming issue of TWINS™ Magazine. You can also send along a photo of you and your twins/multiples with your email.

Contact Christa D. Reed, Editor-in-Chief at twinseditor@twinsmagazine.com.


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When You Realize Your Twins Are Not Babies Anymore

By Jesse Huish

Father of fraternal twins, Wade and Krislyn Huish

This poem is written from a Father's perspective, so I want all mothers to know

Men look at things quite differently, from women, as we watch our children grow.

I have always wanted a little girl to be my little princess and teach her all I know, but my wife had endometriosis so having children normally was certainly not a go.

We heard about infertility doctors and went to check it out. It seemed like it may be possible but I had lots of doubt. The procedure was very expensive but we decided to give it a try, but when I had to give my wife, those shots, I thought she was going to die.

Our first attempts failed, but by now we were desperate, so we went to a clinic, at the advice of some of our friends. The doctors there

knew just what to do and my wife got pregnant with twins.

As I reflect back on the pregnancy we really didn't know what to do; Our OB was really quite worried, but to him this was nothing new. You see my wife was older, a little past her prime, but she was determined to have these babies, they could come at any time.



The day finally came, we rushed to the Emergency Room, and I was really on the run,

As most twins are, they were a few weeks early, so surgery was needed and it really wasn't fun.

My boy and girl came into this world on a wintry weekday morn, and I can't tell you how I felt as I watched them being born. To say it was one of the greatest times in my life is all that I can say. As the babies were rushed off to the nursery, I thought to myself, boy what a day.

Day one started out in the NIC-U, a place this father has never been before; but time has passed so fast, the twins now are four and not babies anymore.

As I look back the first year was really trial and error for us. My wife and I decided to let the twins sleep with us at night, because they were used to being together, I guess that made it right? It was interesting to note that when both of them were together and one twin started to fuss, the other one stayed quiet, an action very curious to us.

It seemed that when it was my turn to take care of them and I chose to separate the two they would gang up on me and I knew I couldn't win. I would frantically call my wife, wherever she was and beg that it was now time for her turn to begin.

Their mother seemed at ease dealing with each new crisis without hardly a worry, but I soon realized that these babies would be growing up in a hurry.

I was hoping that year two would pass by like a blur, but I had no idea what was about to occur. Having two year old twins with nothing to do and a house to explore spelled certain doom. They discovered that the hot water heater had a valve they could twist and ended up flooding the floor of our downstairs recreation room.

There were several other instances from the "Terrible Twos" like putting the cat in the freezer and I was constantly on edge worrying about what next they might do? As a father I learned that a two year old really doesn't think about their actions, they mostly cause trouble due to their reactions.

Hurray they were turning three and I was hoping for a little peace of mind. I truly realized that my twins were one-of-a-kind. They were constantly trying new things you see, and every time they were together they still ganged up on me.

I was amazed to find that now they actually helped each other to try and make me mad. I was shocked to learn that they really thought that they were smarter than dear old Dad.

Well finally it was time for the "Terrible Fours" to arrive and I doubted that this time I would survive. You see at 4 they are much smarter than when they were two and can invent many worse things to get into and do.

This year it was soap powder two inches thick on the rug and colorful markings all over the walls. I was quick to notice that their Grandmother made a lot fewer calls.

Even with all the problems, their fourth year was great, but next year was kindergarten, I could hardly wait. I have discovered that fathers, of twins, need to be patient and keep their cool, because eventually those little ones will be off to school.

So without a doubt, I have noticed that my twins are growing up and always on the run. They both have their own way of getting things done, like playing, learning and always having fun. But now they are little kids, constantly on the go and trying to figure out what their parents really know.

It is kind of sad for they are growing up so fast, but as a father I can always revert back to the past when my twins turned four and I realized they weren't babies anymore.



Jesse Huish resides in Richmond, Virginia and is a Network Security and Telecommunications Administrator in the Information Technology field. He is married to Deborah and they have fraternal twins, Wade and Krislyn, age 12. He retired from the Navy in 1989 after serving for 20 years and that is where he first started writing poetry. He wrote this poem to reflect back on their twins' lives before birth through the beginning of Kindergarten.



Caution:

Mother

AT WORK! *by Ruby Coats-Mosher*

The greatest risk associated with a multiple pregnancy is premature delivery. It has been estimated that half of all twins and three-quarters of all triplets are born prematurely, or before the 37th week of gestation. Exactly why premature labor occurs is not completely understood, but contributing factors may include poor nutrition; physical and mental stress; infection; metabolic disease; and uterine, placental or cervical anomalies. Although additional explanations for premature labor with multiple births concern the over-stretching of the uterus and over-crowding, this seems somewhat less likely because of the number of healthy, well-nourished women who have given birth to normal-weight babies at term.

Since the precise cause of preterm labor is not known, there is no guaranteed method of prevention for all women. There are, however, some practical steps that a woman can take to reduce the risk of going into premature labor. These include securing early specialized prenatal care; strictly following physicians' instructions; keeping to a balanced and nutritious diet; reducing stress as much as possible; utilizing the physical and emotional support of others to cope with that which is inevitable; getting plenty of rest; and recognizing the signs of impending preterm labor. Before

being able to recognize what is abnormal for her pregnancy, however, a woman must be familiar with her body to be able to recognize what is normal for her.

FALSE LABOR

The uterine wall contains a powerful muscle which contracts periodically throughout a woman's life. Many non-pregnant women feel these contractions during menstruation as "cramps".

Pregnant women experience two types of uterine contractions: non-labor, or Braxton Hicks contractions; and the regular contractions which result in childbirth.

Braxton-Hicks contractions are also known as false labor and are usually painless. They may be felt as a tightening or hardening of the abdomen occurring at somewhat irregular intervals. A variety of things, ranging from changing positions or activities can also make Braxton-Hicks contractions diminish.

False labor contractions, unlike those of true labor, do not get progressively close together, and usually occur less than four times per hour and last for only 25 seconds or so. Frequency and duration of contractions vary from pregnancy to pregnancy, however, so it is important that each woman become familiar with her own

normal uterine activity.

It is suggested that a pregnant woman take every day to monitor her uterine contractions. This doesn't mean that a woman should spend time worrying about contractions and whether they may lead to premature labor—quite the contrary. The time should be spent relaxing and simply becoming acquainted with the natural rhythms of her uterus.

One way for a woman to monitor her contractions is to lie down with a pillow behind her back so she is supported slightly onto her left side. Then, using her fingertips, she should press her abdomen gently in various locations, feeling the shape and firmness of her uterus. It can be helpful at first for a health care professional to show a woman how to palpate her uterus and to feel for contractions.

When the uterus is relaxed, it is easily indented with the fingertips. While the uterine wall is soft, the babies can be felt.

IS IT LABOR.... YES OR NO?

The following signs are generally recognized as indicators of possible premature labor and should be monitored and reported to your medical provider.

Regular uterine contractions occurring four or more times per hour—false labor contractions will usually diminish after a time, or with a change in position; true labor contractions will continue. It is important to know that labor contractions may not be painful, or even uncomfortable.

Menstrual-like cramps—these lower-abdominal cramps may be rhythmic or constant.

Lower, dull backache—backache is common in pregnancy, but this will feel different than previous backaches. The ache may be continuous or intermittent, and may radiate to your sides or front.

Pelvic or thigh pressure—again, this pressure will seem different than previously experienced and may be persistent or rhythmic.

Intestinal cramps, diarrhea, or abdominal gas pains.

Vaginal discharge of water, mucus or blood—Discharge can be a sudden rush or a persistent leaking. Bloody discharge can range from pinkish to brownish.

Any general feeling that something is "different"—although nothing outwardly appears wrong, you may be subconsciously in tune with subtle changes occurring



It is easy for a woman to mistake the firm feel of multiple heads and bottoms as a contraction, but with experience she'll learn to distinguish the hard "bumps" of babies from a contraction in which the entire uterus tightens into a hard globular shape, and then relaxes.

It may also be difficult for a woman carrying multiples to feel contractions simply because her uterus is stretched so tight that it always seems firm. But an electronic fetal monitor strapped over the abdomen can pick up contractions even when a woman can't.

A doctor may prescribe a home electronic monitor for patients at risk for premature labor. The monitor belt is worn for a specified period of time, then the unit is hooked up to either a telephone or computer so data can be relayed to a medical center where it is then interpreted by a nurse or physician, who decides if the mother needs further attention at that time.

Whether a woman registers her contractions herself, or they are electronically monitored, the duration of a contraction is times from the point when the uterus begins to tighten to the point of relaxation. The interval between contractions is timed

from the beginning of one contraction to the beginning of the next one.

A record of monitoring sessions helps track trends toward longer or more frequent contractions. Along with the contraction times, a woman may also want to record her activities prior to the monitoring session, in case it may become evident that activities such as crying, sex, or balancing the checkbook may trigger an increase in contractions.

PRETERM LABOR

Women carrying multiples may experience increased preterm contractions which could be a sign of impending preterm labor. As opposed to Braxton-Hicks contractions, preterm labor contractions become progressively longer, stronger and closer together. Also, the contractions of labor are associated with the cervix beginning to dilate, soften and shorten.

If a woman detects any of the signs of preterm labor, she should call her doctor at once, because if labor can be detected before the cervix undergoes significant change and before the membranes have ruptured, the medical team has the best

chance of forestalling delivery. Bedrest and increased fluid intake can sometimes stop the progression of early preterm labor.

If contractions continue to be regular, occurring four or more times per hour, and the cervix begins to show changes, medication is usually indicated to manage the contractions. There are drugs commonly prescribed and used to quiet the uterine muscle and to manage preterm labor.

The statistics for preterm labor among women carrying multiples can be intimidating, but a woman can do much to weight the odds in her favor. A woman carrying twins or more need not—and should not—be afraid that she will deliver early. What she should do is educate herself about the potential problems, take good care of herself, and work closely with her obstetrician.

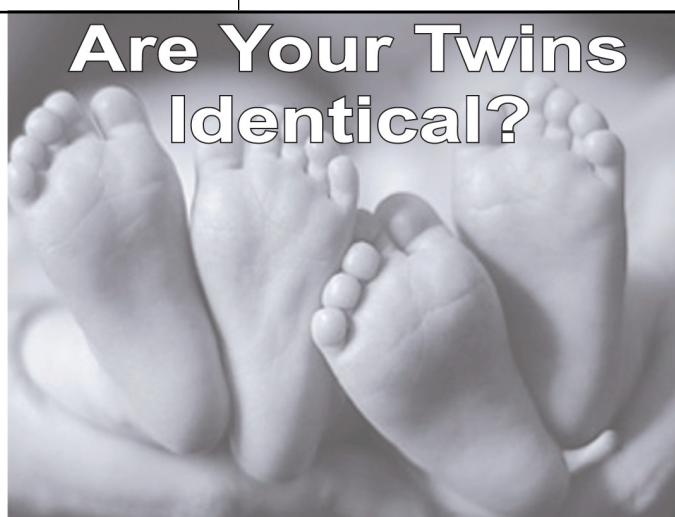
It does appear that a woman who monitors her labor has a greater chance of delivering near term, and the extra effort is surely worth it. Each day in nature's most perfect incubator—the womb—is a priceless gift from a mother to her unborn babies.

Continued on page 35



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Milk for Two

by Allison Berryhill



It may seem overwhelming, but breastfeeding twins is both possible and pleasurable

In the recovery room after delivery, I nursed Harrison and Stuart, first individually, then together. My husband hovered over us, adjusting pillows and babies. Like the first time on water-skis, I was shaky and exhilarated, at once amazed and insecure.

Having breastfed my other children, I wanted desperately to nurse my twins. I wondered if caring for two babies in such an absorbing way would be emotionally and physically overwhelming. Yet I was encouraged by other mothers who had breastfed multiples and were glad they did.

Admittedly nursing twins is not always a tidy business. It can be a bit drippy and at times downright awkward. A neighbor stopped by when my sons were a week old. I should have simply said we were not ready for a visit. But instead I pulled a blanket up to my chin to cover the jumble of breasts and babies. My head poked out the top like the flag on a circus tent. I attempted to make conversation, diving under the blanket every few sentences to reattach my little guys. The guest did not stay long.

Allison Berryhill of Atlantic, Iowa, is a freelance writer and the mother of six, including twin boys born in September 1994.

Breastfeeding twins broadened my definitions of “comfortable position” and “productive afternoon.” It also taught me from the inside out that my babies and I belong to each other. Breastfeeding ensured that every day, every few hours, I folded my babies into my arms, held them against my skin and provided them with what the American Academy of Pediatrics terms optimal infant nutrition.

GETTING STARTED

Learning to breastfeed one baby can be a challenge. Twins multiply the effort. Judy Losh, RN, IBCLC, a lactation consultant at Iowa Methodist Medical Center in Des Moines, reminds new mothers that the more they nurse (or pump), the more milk they will produce.

Establishing an abundant milk supply is job number one for the first weeks. Hosting visitors, planning baptisms and sending birth announcements can all wait. But delaying nursing can lead to a depleted milk supply.

A week or two into breastfeeding, just when you’re merrily on your way, milk gushing, confidence bursting, your twins may hit their first of many growth spurts. Nursing, nursing, nursing your babies tells your body to make more milk. It’s reassuring to know that your breasts will “catch up” to the increased demand within a day or two. Let the laundry pile up; get someone to bring you a plate of egg rolls, and breastfeed as frequently as possible.

LOOKING FOR BALANCE

The early days with twins are an emotional teeter-totter. I found my every nerve ending open to my babies—their silky smell, the taste of their downy skin beneath my kisses—creating sensory overload that left me light-headed. When friends called to provide meals, I couldn’t think clearly enough to say if Monday or Tuesday night was best. I really was not prepared for such confusion and wavering self-confidence.

Formula feeding during this adjustment period looks steady and stable, while breastfeeding may appear to be one more chaotic element in a life that feels out of control. But the long-range advantages of breastfeeding must be considered when determining the “ease” of both feeding methods. According to Losh, infants who are breastfed have lower rates of hospital admissions, ear infections, diarrhea, and rashes than bottle-fed babies. And nursing twins can save \$2,000 or more in formula costs during the babies’ first year.

NIGHTTIME NURSING

Faced with the proverbial “not enough hours in the day” nighttime nursing was a mainstay of my babies’ most milk-dependent months. With newborns, I reclined in a pillow-piled Lay-Z-Boy, each boy to a breast, attached for the night. I did not get long, uninterrupted hours of slumber, but I was no more sleep-deprived than during the final months of pregnancy when few positions were comfortable.

As Harrison and Stuart grew, we graduated to a queen-sized bed, where I found—surprise!—my husband. He welcomed my company enough to tolerate the fact that I brought two babies with me. I kept one tucked in with us, and the other in a crib at arm’s reach, switching babies throughout the night. On our most topsy-turvy nights, my husband would lumber from bed and make his way to my recently abandoned recliner chair.

I accepted night nursing in order to maintain my milk supply, and I came to think of it as a way to accomplish two things at once: I could wake in the morning with my boys already fed.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Ideally, a new mother and her babies can settle right down to nursing. But reality may present less-than-ideal circumstances, and even the most determined mother may feel defeated by the series of obstacles a multiple birth can present.

Continued on page 19

Join the Conversation!

facebook

We asked our fans on the TWINS™ Magazine Facebook page to give us the scoop on whether or not they breastfeed their twins, here's what some of our fans had to say...

Jennifer Gyovai Beauchemin

I'm still nursing my 10.5 month old twins and hope to continue for the next few months. It was a rocky road at first. They were six weeks premature and couldn't latch until they were about 9 weeks old. During those first weeks, I felt like I was attached to the pump 24/7!

Emily Evans Leary

I am still nursing my 17 month old twins. The beginning had its ups and downs both physically and emotionally. Once they hit 4 months nursing was a breeze (though I never really got that tandem nursing thing down too well). We had so many challenges to overcome but it was so worth it in the end!

Amy Van Riessen

Well, I tried for 6 weeks and gave up. I nursed and pumped in between feedings and I could never get my supply up high enough for both babies. So then I had to add supplemental bottles because they were losing too much weight. Between nursing, pumping and bottle feeding I was feeding babies ALL DAY. It was too hard on me and particularly on my older daughter so I made the decision to give up even though I nursed my first born for a year. I'm SO GLAD I made that decision because it made our family much happier.

Chere Perry

Just started the weaning process at 13 months, and now just nurse for comfort at night and mostly they use a sippy cup for milk now. It was lots of work in the early days, but well worth it. My babies have been sooo healthy and happy. Tandem is not easy but sometimes the only option with two hungry crying babies. I think it's actually more work now with all the washing/filling sippy cups for two. I will miss it.

Amy Kuehl Gianos

I nursed my boys until they were 13 months old. They didn't figure out how to latch on until they were 6 weeks old, but once they got the hang of it, it was a breeze. When they were little I mostly did it tandem during the day and one at a time at night. As they got older/bigger we all preferred one at a time, and they slowly started weaning themselves about 11 months old. I miss the quiet moments spent just staring at them as they quietly ate and dozed gently to sleep.

Sally Day Brunk

I nursed my twins for 6 months! Was really hard for me to stop because I nursed my other singles until nearly 3yrs old!! But, multiples are a different story, very emotionally and physically draining! Nursing then pumping and giving the babies that pumped milk and then starting the process all over again! what a blessing, miracle it is to be able to watch 2 little people grow at the same time!

OUT & ABOUT

Limiting outings during the first weeks with newborn twins makes sanity-saving sense for any mother. But when you're ready to roll, the following strategies, offered by women who have breastfed twins, may help. The load is lightened with no bottles to haul, but breastfeeding mothers will want to think ahead. Nursing two babies simultaneously is not discreet.

Shocking is a more accurate term. For your own comfort, not to mention that of those around you, it may be wise to avoid situations when



both babies will want to breastfeed at the same time in public. Choose excursions where you can comfortably nurse one baby or have privacy for nursing—both

friends' homes and mothers' groups are safe bets. By nursing one baby when first arriving at a gathering, you can be ready for the second one when needed. This may mean waking a sleeping baby, but reduces the chance of both babies waking up hungry at the same time. Let others know what is helpful. People are usually eager to hold one baby while the other is nursing. Encourage your friends to pick up a baby without waiting for an invitation.



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To Nap or Not to Nap?

by Janet Gonzalez-Mena

Naptime can be vital to the health of parents of twins, if not to the twins themselves, who usually readjust their sleep habits to find ways of getting the sleep they need. Parents of toddler twins can either help their children change their sleeping patterns to suit the adult in their lives or find another way to get relief time most need desperately if they are at home with their children.

Janet Gonzalez-Mena was a teacher of early child education at Napa Valley College in Napa, California. She was co-author of the book *Infancy and Caregiving* and is the mother of five children.

One father of twin girls now 3 ½ years-old says, "We encouraged the ritual of our children taking a nap by insisting they stay in their rooms during naptime until the level of destruction repeatedly brought us to their sides." Then he and his wife found individual quiet time by taking turns watching the children so one of them could rest for a period every day.

Molly Sullivan, a Berkeley, California early childhood specialist offers this advice on napping. "At some point during toddlerhood, most children wake up soon after going to sleep. At that time, it is imperative that they learn they can put themselves back to sleep. They need to be told clearly, 'It's still naptime.' My experience is that noise from one child doesn't wake the other

eye contact does. A simple solution is putting up a curtain or screen between the twins or using some other means to keep them from seeing each other." She emphasizes that a parent must be firmly convinced his toddlers still need naps. They will go back to sleep if his message is clear, she says.

NAPS AS A NUISANCE

Not all parents find naps a blessing. One mother of four children says, "I thought naps were a hassle. We couldn't go anywhere with the older kids in the afternoon because the twins had to nap. I was glad when they gave up napping, even though for a short period of time, one or the other sometimes fell asleep in his dinner plate...literally laying his head down in his mashed potatoes. Even with this, the freedom was worth it!"

Another parent found naps a problem for this reason. "My twins gave up napping at about 2 ½ years of age. Recently I went back to work and put them in daycare, where they are required to nap. Now with all that sleep in the afternoon, I can't get them to sleep until 10 o'clock at night. I hate it! I never have any time to myself in the evening."



Parents of twins must be aware of their own needs and find ways to meet them. Getting regular relief from parenting is essential on a daily basis. Time off from the exhausting job of being with toddlers all day promotes parents' mental and physical health. They should recognize this need and not feel guilty about arranging for it. One way to accomplish this is by continuing naptime through the toddler years, according to some parents.

Others disagree with this suggestion, arguing that children should understand their own physical needs. This important lesson should be learned in early childhood, they say, and resting when needed rather than as a routine is the best way to promote this learning.

Although this idea may work for some people, one mother of very active twin toddler boys says, "When my twins were newborns, my aunt, also a mother of twins, told me, 'I have just one piece of advice on how to keep your sanity: Put them on the same eating and sleeping schedule.' I've followed that advice and found that it works very well. My boys are definitely individuals, and they have different sleep needs. I have put them on the same schedule, which means that they nap about the same amount of time, but one wakes up earlier than the other in the morning."

This mother also sees a relationship between diet and rest, so she tries to keep sugar out of her boys' diets so they can rest without being all "hyped up". She keeps her boys together when they nap, considering it a real advantage that they can hop in bed with each other because, in her opinion, the togetherness helps them sleep.

ENFORCING RULES

Another mother of twins who are 5 ½ years old says her children don't nap, but she insists they have a quiet time every day. "I put them in separate rooms at an early age, making sure they got enough fresh air and exercise, and always are put to bed early at night so they are tired but not overly tired. I have made naptime a routine and I'm kind of strict about it. I found, though, as they got older, I couldn't let them sleep all afternoon or they wouldn't go to sleep at night. By the time they were 3-years-old, I had to wake them up after an hour's nap," she reports, "to ensure a workable bedtime."

Both of these mothers have no complaints about their toddlers' naps primarily because they were very clear about their beliefs in naps and firm about following through with enforcement—the key to getting toddlers to follow any parents' rules.

Ambiguous feelings, guilt pangs, and hesitation cause parents to be inconsistent in their directions to their children which leads to their inability to manage their toddlers' rest time. Parents need to explore some options until they find a napping solution that's comfortable for their children and themselves. ♥

ENDING NAPTIME BATTLES

1. Don't be overly helpful or interesting when you respond to your twins requests during their supposed resting time. They can ease themselves back to sleep if they don't get too wide awake or become dependent on you to help them.
2. Separate the twins visually or physically if they keep each other awake.
3. Make sure your children get plenty of fresh air and exercise, without getting overtired. Some children have a hard time settling down to sleep when they are exhausted.
4. Make naptime a routine, a ritual. When it occurs at the same time in the same place, children come to expect it and may respond better than if they just lie down whenever or wherever they are tired.

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Yes! They Can Learn to Care

by Patricia Edmister, Ph.D.

When Tammy's mother got home, collapsed on the couch and said, "I just need a few minutes to unwind and put my feet up." 3-year-old Tammy ran to get her mother's slippers out of the closet and brought them, along with her teddy bear, out to her mom, saying, "These will make you feel better!"

When 3 ½-year-old Donald was playing with his truck in the sandbox with his twin brother David and the wheels came off, causing Donald to cry, David offered Donald his truck to help move the sand, saying, "Don't be sad—this will work, and maybe mom can fix the wheels."

Sometimes adults are surprised when children this young or even younger display such empathic behavior toward other children or adults. Research at the National Institute of Mental Health and at various universities, has shown, however, that babies as young as 12 months often demonstrate extremely compassionate, generous behavior. Their parents' example—behaving in an empathic, caring way—was found to be the greatest influence on the children's behaviors.

Patricia Edmister, Ph.D. was the director of developmental psychology and children's study at the California Family Study Center in the mid-1990's. She is also a mother of fraternal twins.

HOW EMPATHIC BEHAVIOR DEVELOPS

Empathy with others seems to be conveyed to young children through their parents' acts, rather than through their words, although words combined with actions become increasingly important as the youngsters get older. For example, when a parent explains how another person feels when that person is sad or hurt or tired, the child

is better able to understand how his actions can help the other feel better.

Another major contributor to a youngster's developing empathy is the opportunity to form significant attachments

to other young children. Edward Mueller's research at Boston University showed that toddlers who have frequent opportunities to play with the same toddlers develop strong emotional connections with each other. Deborah Vandell, a psychologist at the University of Wisconsin, found that preschoolers who have an opportunity to be with each other on a regular basis feel safe, focus on each other and develop true friendships. These friendships tended to bring out each other's empathy, affection and generosity.

Being a twin increases the potential for the early development of empathic behavior, since the children have a "built-in" friend of the same age with whom a relationship can be established and behavior practiced and rewarded. In addition, the children potentially are exposed to a greater amount of positive parental modeling of empathic behavior (with the same-age sibling). Since more opportunities will arise due to the presence of the additional same-age child. This, then, provides additional positive reinforcement of empathic skill demonstration.

Same-age "peers" or siblings in this case, often play an important role in moving each other to the next developmental step. The child who is slightly more advanced in terms of empathy and compassion provides a model for the less advanced child, which that child then sees reinforced.

Parents do need to be aware, though, that this is not always true when two children are very different temperamentally. In some cases, a special quality seems to develop between two children; in other cases it doesn't. Also, different children have different personalities and personal styles, and react to parental



STAGES OF EMPATHY

Children go through various stages before demonstrating empathy. First, they only think of themselves; thinking of doing something for someone else does not occur to them. Next, they may do a "good" deed that will benefit someone else, but the child expects to be rewarded for it, too. At the next stage, the child understands that it is important to do things for others and that it doesn't matter whether or not he or she is rewarded. The child really understands how the other person feels if he fell down and hurt himself, or if he lost a toy and the person who found it kept it.

modeling and reinforcement in different degrees.

Finally, the fact that a child demonstrates empathic behavior some of the time does not mean you can expect it all the time. When a child is just moving into this stage, when he or she is tired or having a bad day, or when the child lives in an environment where empathic behavior has not been modeled or nurtured, he is much less likely to demonstrate empathy. So, if your child does not show empathy on a given day, be understanding, sympathetic and nurturing, and move on to the next day when he or she is refreshed and more emotionally available. ♥

CAN CHILDREN BE TOO EMPATHIC?

Yes! Some children who seem to always want to make the other person happy—even at their own expense—may be acting out of anxiety. The fear seems to be that if they aren't always helping others, they might be seen as selfish. They then worry that this would bring a parent's wrath, or the wrath of others, down upon them.

This type of behavior is often seen in children whose parents fight a lot, or who are going through a divorce. The children think that by being perfect angels, they can "make things better" for the parents. Occasionally, in fact, children in these situations become the nurturers of their parents, thereby reversing the natural parent-child roles.

Sometimes children exposed to situations where others are experiencing trauma or suffering will become depressed or withdrawn because they identify so much with the pain and suffering of those less fortunate.



7 STEPS TO TEACHING EMPATHY

1. Demonstrate/model affection and caring for your children. Children will pattern their behavior after that demonstrated by parents—parent-to-parent and parent-to-child.
2. Don't "hold-back" on showing affection and empathy with either boys or girls. Be as empathic with boys as you are with girls.
3. Compliment your children when they display empathic behavior—when they give help to a child who's crying because he's fallen or pat a child on the back when she's sad because a toy broke, for often children display empathy through behavior, not words.
4. Read stories to your children that have empathic behavior in the text; discuss real-life situations involving empathic behavior, such as hurricane relief aid to New Orleans. Involve your children when you send donations to charitable organizations.
5. Model empathy toward others and involve your child as a participant and observer by helping out in community center, church or nursery school. When someone does something nice for you, tell your children how that kind behavior makes you feel.
6. Comment on people you look up to in terms of why you respect them; identify people who exemplify empathy and explain to your children why they behave as they do and how good that makes the recipients feels.
7. Monitor your child's television viewing. Research has shown that children who watch empathic behavior on TV behave more empathically, showing, caring, sharing, comforting, and helping behaviors toward others.

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It Makes **\$ense** To Teach Twins The Value of **Dollars & Cents**

By Marybeth Grass

As parents we strive to raise our kids with good judgment, solid values, and to be responsible for their actions. But clearly there is room for improvement when it comes to learning financial responsibility. Consumer credit card debt is at an all time high, the mortgage crisis is far from over and the list goes on. These are adult problems, but where does this leave our kids? Destined to repeat the same money mistakes?

Nancy and John Munley have been looking for creative ways to teach their 11-year-old twin girls good financial habits. Now as tweens, they know their girls' spending habits have become a bigger topic of conversation in their home than ever before.

Like 13 million other American families, twins Kristin and Erin receive allowance, but this model family uses a hi-tech twist. They subscribed to **www.ThreeJars.com** a new online

allowance system that helps guide the girls in managing their money. The website is a hands-on way for kids to learn the three fundamentals

of money – **spending, saving and sharing** – helping them build a healthy financial foundation into adulthood.

Nancy and John set the allowance limit for both girls and how often they receive it. The site keeps track of the totals of what is owed and what has been paid out. The girls check how their money is growing and where it's going. Nancy acts as the ATM, providing payouts to the girls in the form of cash or gift cards available for purchase on the website. Funds can also be donated across the website to kid-oriented causes administered by more than a dozen leading charities, including the Nature Conservancy and the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society.

Nancy is excited about the program, "As a family we made a choice about how to divvy up their allowance between the three separate jars – **Save, Spend and Share**. I love how the girls track the money trickling into their accounts and see for themselves how money is about more than a movie ticket."

Erin and Kristin are having fun, getting a better idea of what's happening with their own money as well as each other's. "Although Kristin and I have a lot of the same interests,





Kristin and Erin Munley

we're different in the way we handle our money. It's been funny watching Kristin save all of her money. I'm more of a spender." said Erin.

Although they save money differently, both agree on how to share their money. With two younger siblings, the girls are both drawn to the Plumpy'nut cause on ThreeJars administered by Save the Children. "We like to help little kids that don't

have much. It's amazing what a difference a few dollars can make." said Kristin.

ThreeJars.com was created by Anton Simunovic, a father of six young children. The idea for the website came about from conversations with his wife, where they decided they wanted to raise children with minds for managing money and hearts for helping others. With a successful career as an investor and entrepreneur, he saw the need to create an easy way for kids to be responsible with their pocketbooks.

"I wanted to build something that the whole family could have fun with. Financially empowered kids develop positive habits without even knowing it. The trick is to start kids early, before peer pressure is in high gear."

John and Nancy used to casually talk to the girls about saving, spending and sharing, but found it difficult to formalize. John adds, "Although I wanted the girls to focus more on saving and sharing, it seems we spent all of our time talking about spending. Now they see the whole picture of money for themselves which has been a real eye-opener." Nancy adds "I love how the girls have become more independent and learn from their money while I'm still in

control of it. As they get more responsible, I'll let go of the reins."

Erin and Kristin get hands on practice as mini-money managers by utilizing ThreeJars' savings program. The kids boost their savings by making Parent Bond and Certificate of Deposit *investments*. If they lock-up their money for set periods of time they earn interest paid by their parents, turning saving into a habit. Adds Kristin, "Erin thinks it's crazy that I save all my money, but I'm really boosting my savings so I can pay for half of the I-Touch I want for Christmas."

The twins can also earn extra money by requesting one-time projects around the house. A list of over 200 ideas makes it easy for their entrepreneurial spirit to blossom and keep track of their earnings on the website. Nancy says "The girls have always been pretty good with their chores, but I must say I've never seen them so keen to help out as this holiday season. ThreeJars has been a big help."

With no advertising or sharing of personal information on ThreeJars, the Munley's have gained peace of mind knowing that Erin and Kristin are building a solid understanding of how to use money that most adults are still struggling to find. ♥



Continued from page 13

INFANT

Cesarean deliveries sometimes delay early breastfeeding opportunities and make some feeding positions uncomfortable. Premature twins especially benefit from the immunity protection of mother's milk, but are sometimes too weak to suckle at the breast. If for any reason newborns are not nursing frequently and vigorously, a mother needs to establish her milk supply with a high-quality breast pump. Electric pumps that draw milk from both breasts simultaneously are best.

Be forewarned: Pumping is not the warm, cozy experience that actual breastfeeding is. As a friend who pumped for her baby's first four weeks said, "It's like breastfeeding a piece of furniture." But pumping is a temporary bridge to keep milk flowing until babies are nursing well. And it gives the mother a direct impact on her twins' health, which can bolster her sense of purpose during this stressful time.

IN MY EXPERIENCE

Weighing in at 5 pounds, 11 ounces and 6 pounds, Stuart and Harrison were born three weeks early—average for twins. Their delivery was uncomplicated, and neither boy had trouble learning to latch onto the breast. However, both babies were jaundiced and sleepy. I needed to wake them every few hours and coax them through feedings.

Stuart seemed to be nursing as well as Harrison, but he was not gaining weight as he neared the three-week mark. I began to panic. In the upheaval of postpartum, I agonized that Stuart's slow weight gain signaled my inability to meet the needs of twins. My husband was caught between trying to calm his increasingly anxious wife and worrying about his sons.

We needed an action plan and reassurance. My lactation consultant provided both, helping us zero in on why Stuart's weight was not picking up, while Harrison nursed with long draws and pulls—gulping milk (nutritive sucking)—Stuart just sip-sipped along, pacifying himself but not nursing effectively.

Judy Losh explained that we needed to get extra calories into Stuart to improve his strength at the breast. I began pumping after feedings, collecting the "hind-milk," which is higher in calories than the "fore-milk" from the first minutes of nursing. (Half and half compared to 2%, you might say.) We then fed the collected milk to Stuart with a bottle.

An extra eight ounces of pumped hind-milk a day provided the growth calories Stuart needed. He grew stronger after only a few days, and we discontinued supplementing as his weight began to climb. Judy's support saw us through an episode that could have overwhelmed us.

The turmoil of the first weeks gives way to growing calm. Order and focus emerge as nursing becomes a way of life, a baby-led approach to mothering that shapes the days, eventually saving time and energy. Why walk all the way to the kitchen to prepare a substitute for something nature hid under your sweatshirt? Once nursing is well established, most mothers find it to be a relaxing, joyful part of nurturing their babies. ♥

10 Tips for taking great Holiday Photos

Any mom or dad of twins knows that having them both look at the camera at once (let alone smile) is a true task... but you don't have to be a professional to meet this challenge, especially during the holidays! Snapping a great holiday photo is the same as taking a great photo any other day of the year. The only thing that changes is the setting.

1. **Fill the frame.** Get up close; your kids' faces should fill two-thirds of the frame.
2. **Flash those twins.** Indoors, a flash adds needed illumination. Outdoors, place your twins with their back to the sun and use the flash to illuminate their faces. This eliminates squinty eyes.
3. **Do a back ground check.** Make sure clutter, busy patterns or telephone poles don't distract from the focus of the image—your twins' faces.
4. **Zoom, zoom, zoom.** If you have a camera with a zoom lens, a long setting (85 to 100 mm) makes faces look better.
5. **Twenergy.** Music helps sets the mood or an activity such as reading a story, but you can't force a mood or fool the camera. If you can't get two happy faces in one shot, try individual shots. In fact, individual shots should be part of your routine approach to photographing multiples.
6. **Red-eye relief.** If your camera doesn't have a multiple-flash feature, try standing slightly to the side and have your twins look to one side of you rather than straight at the camera. If your camera has a cable that connects the flash to the camera, hold the flash away from the camera.
7. **Light of your lives.** Be sure that you have proper lighting and it isn't too dark (or too bright) when taking photos indoors.
8. **The 'plane' truth.** If you position your twins in different plans, such as one behind the other, one may be out of focus. You don't have to line them up like little soldiers, however. One can lean over the shoulders of the other, or have one stand and the other sit, or position them face-to-face.
9. **Be prepared.** Often the best shots are candid. Keep an eye out for those moments of joy, tenderness and chaos that happen every day and remember, once they are three, two is gone forever!
10. **A good photo lab** can get the most from your digital images and can even use the latest photo editing technology to make any corrections needed.



12 Ways of Gifting this Holiday Season

Season's green'ing! This is the perfect time of year to get in the green spirit. Many Americans are still on tight budgets with savings on their minds. Just in time for gift-giving season Kim Carlson, eco-expert and founder of EarthSmart Consumer Certified, is ushering the holidays with the twelve ways of gifting. Before disposing of commonly tossed items, stop and rethink it. Can it be made more attractive, repaired or crafted into something else? Give it a second-life. Here are the twelve ways of gifting that are not only wallet friendly but eco-friendly too.



1. Extra or leftover fabric? Make cloth covered gift boxes or bags instead of wrapping paper.
2. Cover gift boxes with left over contact paper or wallpaper.
3. Use saved bows from other gifts. It's ok to reuse these items as long as you're not giving it to the person who gave it to you.
4. Last year's holiday cards make great gift tag. When cutting the card use decorative scissor for a little something extra.
5. Take a walk through Mother Nature and collect pinecones. Pinecones with raffia (ribbon made from a plant) are great for adorning boxes.
6. Ice cream lovers, start collecting and saving your cartons. Take a washed out and clean cylinder ice cream carton. Cover the outside and use as cookie and candy gift boxes.
7. Old paint and coffee cans are great for shipping or using as a gift box in a fun creative way. Make sure it's thoroughly cleaned out and decorate the outside. It can even be a double gift where the person can use the paint can for storing or organizing items,
8. Shipping? If you have left over or don't mind popping extra dry popped popcorn for movie night, this is a great way to send a treat for the birds while protecting your package.
9. Reusable items, such as hair bows, ornaments, shoe laces or toys can adorn packages and gift bags. Again, they can double as gifts as well.
10. Stencils or pictures from holiday cards pasted onto a plain brown paper bag or box.
11. Old neckties can make clever bows on any gift. The silkiness of the neckties glams up any ole box with out doing much.
12. For those who have old faux flowers collecting dust, use them for gift wrapping and to dress up ordinary boxes. Just be sure to dust them off first.

Remember get creative, these are only starter ideas. Feel free to try alternative gifting options that are green as well. After the holidays, be sure to use leftover gift wrap to line shelves or drawers. Also it can be cut up to make great scratch pads by stringing together. For more information on Kim, please visit www.earthsmartconsumer.com. Also, be sure to follow her on twitter @KimEarthCarlson and become a facebook fan at EarthSmart Consumer Certified.

Holiday traditions begin young. . .

- Read aloud. Read the same story every Christmas Eve, or a different one every night for one week leading up to Christmas Eve or a different Hanukkah story every one of the eight nights quickly becomes a favorite seasonal tradition.
- Plan home-centered activities that bring all family members together and are simple enough that toddlers can enjoy—baking a simple cookie recipe, making a cranberry relish, cutting out gingerbread starts to bake and hang on the tree or “helping” older children play a game of spin-the-dreidel.
- Instill the importance of giving by taking your twins to neighbors’ homes and letting both of them hand some homemade goodies—a place of cookies or loaf of bread, for example—to your neighbor.
- Take a few minutes to show your toddlers photos from last year’s holiday celebrations. They’ll love seeing how little they were, and you’ll be reminded that you survived last year, and you’ll survive this year, too!

At the age of 3, your twins begin to widen their horizons. They express themselves more effectively and become more social. This is a time when you can expand their idea of the holidays from what they want and get to the spirit of giving. Whether it is shopping for Toys for Tots or taking food to a food bank, children can begin to enjoy holiday traditions that teach them to think of others. Just one project each year can build lifelong habits.

- Take your twins shopping for each other separately. Use this opportunity to talk about how they are different and how they are similar. Talk about what gifts each would like.
- Take your twins shopping for Toys for Tots and together deliver the gifts to your local fire station or other collection point.
- Support a needy Angel Tree Family
- Let your twins help make a list of “holiday food” that you take to the food bank.
- Take children’s gifts to the local shelter



Holiday Shipping Deadlines for Christmas 2009

To help you plan your holiday shopping the folks at www.CouponSherpa.com has compiled a list of stores and their



drop-dead holiday shipping deadlines for

Christmas delivery. They’ve done their best to make sure the dates and times are accurate, but recommend that you confirm this information with the merchant you are shopping with. Happy shopping! Click on this link to get all the deadlines and information you need: <http://www.couponsherpa.com/online-coupons/holiday-shipping-deadlines/>



Track Santa on Christmas Eve:
www.noradsanta.org

Write a letter to Santa:

www.santaclaus.com

www.saintnick.org

www.santaclausonline.com

Tips on Twin Play and Toys

from www.toytips.com

According to Marianne Szymanski, toy expert and founder of Toys Tips, Inc., an international child development research group she founded in 1991, has this to share about toys and twin play from her professional and personal observations:

- ❄ Don’t buy two of each toy every time; however, buying two of a favorite doll, animal or licensed character makes sense.
- ❄ Check that skill levels and interest required, as well as age, is appropriate for each child since even twins can develop at different levels.
- ❄ Keep in mind how each child will feel if he or she does not receive the same toy as his or her twin
- ❄ Think about safety of toys when used by children at the same developmental stage.
- ❄ Look for toys that allow individuality of play—decreases conflict.
- ❄ Watch how twins do play together more often than other children (dependent upon age).
- ❄ Discover how toys for multiple users foster social interaction and develop sharing and taking turns.
- ❄ Observe any gender differences when buying one toy for boy/girl twins; many gravitate toward traditional gender play patterns.

You can check out more tips by visiting www.toytips.com for reviews and more advice from Marianne Szymanski.

Tips to **Survive** the **Season** with **Toddler Twins**

by Jodie Richelle

What plans have you made for the coming holiday season? Will you fill your house with elaborate decorations? Do you look forward to wandering through quaint village shops, searching for that perfect gift? Maybe you just want to sit back and relax at parties given by family and friends.

I'm pretty sure I won't be doing any of those things this year. I am the mother of toddler twins. Decorations are a waste of time. My toddlers would pull them down and stuff them into the DVD/VCR. Quaint village shops lock their doors when they see our double stroller and 20 sticky fingers coming. I do go to parties, but I don't sit and I certainly don't relax.

If you're parenting toddlers this season, keep their needs and abilities in mind as you make your holiday plans. Don't frustrate yourself by expecting too much from them.

Keep your needs in mind as well. Caring for young twins can be demanding. It won't take many extra holiday chores before you're feeling overwhelmed. Cut back on your activities before that happens. No one will enjoy your homemade cookies and beautiful decorations if you're grouchy because you're doing too much.

KEEP DECORATIONS SIMPLE

If you have a Christmas tree, decorate only the top half. Otherwise, your toddlers will remove whatever they can reach. They'll



chew on the Christmas lights, break the glass ornaments and spread those metal hooks everywhere. Don't use tinsel this year. It finds its way to the floor and could be dangerous if your twins swallowed it.

If you can't get into the holiday spirit without a sleigh load of decorations, take your efforts outdoors. Decorate your bushes or fences with outdoor lights. Put a big wreath on your door. These things will give you the feeling of the holidays without sacrificing your toddlers' safety or your sanity.

If you must decorate an indoor tree with your finest glass ornaments, complete with presents under the branches, enclose the tree with indoor play yard fencing to keep your little ones out.

BE SMART ABOUT SHOPPING

We all know that we should start shopping in August. We also know to leave our twins at home when we shop. Unfortunately, most of us don't—or are unable—to follow this excellent advice. Here's what to do when you must venture into the holiday crowds with your toddlers.

Make a list...before you leave the house. List all the stores you want to visit and beside each store list things you must buy there. Next, prioritize your list. When you shop, go to the most important store first and make your way down the list. Don't expect to get to every store.

Head for the mall. One stop shopping when you have twins in tow is the way to go. You have to load them into and unload them from the car and strap them into their stroller only once. That's much easier than loading and unloading twins, stroller and supplies at every store. Plan to arrive at the mall when it opens. Crowds are thinner and you and your twins will be well rested.

Be Prepared. Bring along plenty of supplies. Cups of juice and some snacks will keep your toddlers from getting hungry and crabby. Animal crackers, graham crackers and Cheerios travel well. Or you might stop for a soft-pretzel break. Bring along some toys



that your twins haven't seen for some time. One desperate mom I know bought new toys to keep her kids busy while she finished her shopping. (But I only did it once.)

Shop from home. Are you unable to face another outing with your twins? This time of year my mailbox and email in-box are filled with catalogs and special online offers for shopping from the comfort of your own computer. Just be sure to leave plenty of time for deliveries and returns.

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR HOLIDAY VISITS

Accept all invitations to parties given by parents of toddlers. Their houses likely will contain a room that's safe, unbreakable and filled with toys. That's the main ingredient for a good party these days.

Toddler-proof other homes. When you enter a party with your twins, quickly scan for dangers. Depending on the occasion and your relationship with the hostess, decide what you can ask to change. Few people will object to keeping the bathroom door closed, if it's nearby. If your twins are attacking the cheese tray on the coffee table, ask if you can move it to a higher location.

If you are going to stay with family members for a few days, call ahead and ask your relatives to stash the crystal, hard candies and delicate decorations up high, or forego them altogether this year. Your twins probably will be starving before the turkey is ready, so plan to keep them on their regular meal schedule. (Visiting another home filled with people who fuss over them and give them more gifts than you or they can handle will be disruptive enough; they don't need to have lunch delayed for turkey and dressing that probably won't appeal to them anyway.)

Protect Fido. Pets are tricky. Most owners believe that their pet would never harm anyone. Of course, the pet never had two 18-month-olds try to ride him like a pony. Small children simply do not know how to treat animals. Do the pet and your twins a favor and keep them separated.

Be prepared. Carry a bottle of syrup of ipecac with you when you travel. The American Association of Poison Control Centers reports that many poisonings occur when daily routines are disrupted. Be on your guard this holiday season. (By the way, poinsettias are not poisonous, but mistletoe and holly berries are.)

Toddler twins need a lot of attention. Don't expect too much of them or yourself. Cut back on your commitments this holiday season in order to have plenty of time to enjoy your little angels and don't forget to take lots of pictures! ♥

Jodie Richelle, a freelance writer who resides in Monroeville, New Jersey, made it through the toddler years and the holidays with her boy/girl twins, who are now age 11-years-old.



TWINS Annual Holiday Gift Guide

Our Top Picks!

The Holidays are here and having multiples makes for twice the fun! It's also the time of year for TWINS™ Magazine's annual Holiday Gift Guide. As always, we enjoyed coming up with this year's top picks so you can have more time to enjoy with your family this season. Here is a list of toys and gift ideas that would be terrific for two and our recommendations this year:

INFANTS

NEW! Infant Babywrap by Merino Kids of New Zealand **\$49.00**

Keeping babies and toddler cozy, warm and safe at night just got even more stylish thanks to a savvy line!

This natural cuddly, allergy-safe swaddler regulates baby's body temperature and allows little ones freedom to move naturally while swaddled as they did in the womb. Comes in shades of Pink, Periwinkle and Natural--visit www.babysleepbags.com



Mega Bloks 123 School Bus™ **by Mega Bloks, Inc.** **\$9.99** **Starts at 1 years of age**

This little school bus is easy for small hands to build. Blocks are printed with numbers and icons encourage early learning and provide a social activity for parent and child. The movement of the school bus and the blocks provided interaction, fine motor movement and thinking skills.



First Snaps & First Pops by ALEX **Ages: 6 months & Up** **Price: \$17.99**

The easy-to-manipulate colorful and textured pieces are fun to grab, grip and pull. Snapping together and pulling apart help develop manual dexterity. With a little guidance and practice, young testers mastered linking several pieces together. Mom can then cleverly introduce two games: sorting the shapes by color, and putting all the pieces back into the handy storage container.



Sparkling Symphony Gym by Fisher Price **\$40.00** **Starts at age 3 months**

This activity gym plays five classical pieces and four nursery tunes with sparkling light and sound effects and includes Newborn Mode, Infant Mode and Toddler Mode. Develops baby's gross and fine motor skills, as well as hand-eye coordination when kicking to reach the objects, grasping the toys, pressing keys and later stand beside it before learning to walk.

TODDLERS



Super Sleep Sacks for Toddlers by Merino Kids of New Zealand
\$119.00-\$129.00

Super Sleep Sacks are crafted from cuddly-soft superfine merino, it absorbs and releases moisture to warm or cool little ones, regulating their body temperature so they don't overheat or wake up cold. Visit www.babysleepbags.com

Clipo Hippo by Playskool
\$20.99
Starts at 18 months years of age

This set contains 20 CLIP pieces of different shapes and colors. The pieces have pegs, which allow them to connect to each other and the back and wheels of the hippo building base. All of the pieces can be stored inside of the hippo, which can be wheeled around the floor. Connecting the blocks encourages creativity while enhancing fine motor skills and functional hand movements.



NEW! Tag™ Junior Book Pal by Leap Frog
\$34.99
Ages 24 Months to 4 Years

Tag Junior Brings books to life, entertaining kids while strengthening reading abilities. Silly sound effects and songs will keep your kids occupied on even the longest road trips. "Book Explorer," reads to children, so parents can enjoy a book of their own!



Toddlers' Tango Creative music and Movement by Toddlers' Tango Creative Music and Movement
\$24.99

Starts at 2 years of age
 This interactive DVD comes packaged in a vinyl tote containing rhythm sticks, shaky egg, shiny maraca, scarf and rainbow colored streamers. A booklet with the lyrics invites you and your child to join in the fun by singing and dancing along to the DVD.

Step2 All Around Art Tower by The Step2 Company
Price: \$79.99
Starts at 2 years of age

This Art Tower is a plastic table and stool set that has a pole in the middle with large bins to house art supplies. Just the right size for young artists, the two stools have wide bottoms for extra stability. The table has a slightly elevated rim that prevents spills from reaching the floor.



PRE-SCHOOL

Alphabetz Superphonic Decoder Cards by Ideopolis, LLC.

Ages 3 to 7
\$19.95

These award winning new educational cards teach language and the 46 sounds of our alphabet in a fun and engaging way. Each laminated card features a robot wearing a letter or letter team on its chest and an icon on its head that serve as a constant visual reference to the sound the letter or letter team makes. Introduces the alphabet to young children and helps them learn about the alphabet while having fun. www.alphabetz.com



NEW! Text & Learn by Leap Frog Ages 3 to 6 \$21.99

Text & Learn is a replica of mom and dad's favorite travel device, the smart-phone! This fun new product includes multiple games focusing on letter recognition, shape matching and keyboard skills, keeping kids engaged for hours. It is ultra-compact, ideal for seat back pockets on airplanes or trains.



"Growing Smart" Laugh with Me Botley by Kid Designs

\$39.99
Starts at age 4

This robot is a low-key tech toy that stimulates logic, deductive reasoning skills and intellectual thinking through math, spelling and memory games. The screen displays questions and the user either presses on his tummy or uses the included remote control to answer them. There are 7 learning zones with 30 activities. Easily portable for the on-the-go game play. There are 3 volume settings for appropriate use and an automatic shut-off feature.

Pretend & Play School Set by Learning Resources

\$29.95
Starts at age 3

For children who enjoy "playing school", this is a pretend classroom that encourages the child to be the teacher. Accessories included are a grade book, stickers, hall passes, clock, bell, dry erase board, markers, calendar, map, pointer all are stored in a 16" x 38" tri-fold carry board. Made of nylon with Velcro pockets, it is easy to wipe clean and is easy to store underneath a bed or in a closet, when not in use.



4-Story Savannah Dollhouse by KidKraft GREAT DEAL— FREE SHIPPING on this item & many more visit www.alototots.com

Starts at age 4
\$162.00

Stately Southern living at its best! The 4-story dollhouse and the included 14 pieces of traditional furniture are all impeccably crafted in solid wood and sized for 12" dolls. Over 4 feet tall, this impressive structure makes the perfect home for your twins' dolls!



SCHOOL-AGE

Tek Tag by Wild Planet

\$19.99 - \$24.99

Ages 6 to 10

An electronic tag game where each player wears a sensor pod on his arm and aims to score by touching his opponent's pod while defending his own sensor. The pods are easily strapped on to an arm or a belt and running after each other leads to physically active play. The touch-sensitive sensors intensify the game with sound effects, warning sirens and a digital display depicting the remaining game time left. www.wildplanet.com.



101-in-1 Party Megamix for Wii and 101-in-1 Explosive Megamix for Nintendo DS is here and a great gift for the holidays!
FUN Family Activity
Starts at age 6
\$19.99

Looking for something fun for the family at a great value? Then try 101-in-1 Party Megamix for Wii and 101-in-1 Explosive Megamix for Nintendo DS! Kids and adults will find favorites to play solo or together in this collection of one hundred and one family-friendly, addictive games. It's a quality collection of easy to play yet tough to master mini games that everyone can enjoy, and priced at only \$19.99, that's less than 20 cents per game!



Ello-opolis by Mattel Girls
\$19.99
Starts at age 6

This is a town-themed snap-together building set geared and designed for girls. The colors are reflective of girls' tastes though some boys may still find it intriguing. Manipulating the pieces encourage fine motor skills, creativity, imagination and open-ended play. Playing with the model alone or with other toys offers extended play value.



The Smart Mom's Toy Box

10 Toys Under \$10; Building Your Child's Brains Skills without Breaking Your Budget. The holidays have arrived and many parents are concerned about getting the most bang for their buck when it comes to buying toys. They want them to be fun, educational and affordable. But is that asking too much? Not according to the cognitive skills experts at LearningRx. The national brain-training company is sharing tips for savvy shoppers looking to buy inexpensive toys that build learning skills – all under the guise of fun.

- 1. Slamwich (\$9.06) how it's played:** Players take turns flipping their top card onto the center pile. If two matching cards are thrown down in a row, that's a Double Decker. The first player to slap the pile when they see a Double Decker keeps all the cards in the pile. If two of the same cards (such as two bacon cards) are separated by one other card (such as a peanut butter card), that's a "Slamwich." As with the Double Decker, the first player to slap a Slamwich gets all the cards in the pile. There are also Muncher Cards and Thief Cards to help players gain cards. **Ages:** 6 and up. **Cognitive skills:** Sustained attention, memory, visual processing, processing speed
- 2. Jax Doodle Dice (\$8.86) how it's played:** Players roll dice and then rearrange the designs on the dice to try to match a doodle on one of six colored cards. The first player to collect one card of each color wins. **Ages:** 6 and up **Cognitive skills:** Visual processing, planning, problem solving, analysis skills
- 3. I-Spot Junior Card Games for the Road (\$7.99) How it's played:** Players match images on one of 55 cards to items they see on their journey. **Ages:** 3 and up. **Cognitive skills:** Attention, word analysis, visual processing
- 4. Set Game (\$9.27) how it's played:** Players review images on dealt cards for logical sets (shapes, colors, number of images). **Ages:** 4 and up. **Cognitive skills:** Sequential thinking, processing speed, visual processing

- 5. Rhyming Bingo (\$6.91) how it's played:** Players place chips on pictures of items that rhyme with the caller's word. **Ages:** 4 – 7. **Cognitive skills:** Rhyming, sound blending and segmenting, auditory processing
- 6. Math Dice (\$8.78) How it's played:** Players use addition, subtraction, multiplication, division and powers to try to get closest to the target number. **Ages:** 8 and up. **Cognitive skills:** Math computations, analysis skills, planning, numerical fluency, attention
- 7. My Word! (\$8.99) how it's played:** Players search the dealt single and double letter cards and try to be the first to call out a word using at least three cards. **Ages:** 7 and up. **Cognitive skills:** Sound blending and segmenting, sequential thinking, word analysis, visual processing, processing speed
- 8. The Storybook Game (\$9.95) how it's played:** Children draw one card at a time and create a unique story, memorizing the cards as they're played. Lunchbox tin includes 54 illustrated cards. **Ages:** 2 – 4. **Cognitive skills:** Memory, visual processing, planning
- 9. Granny Apples (\$6.09) how it's played:** Players count the apples scattered in play but must subtract for birds, worms and apple pies that decrease the total. **Ages:** 8 and up. **Cognitive skills:** Math computations, processing speed, numerical fluency, attention
- 10. Gordian's Knot (\$8.87) how it's played:** Player must take the knot apart – which takes 69 moves! **Ages:** 8 and up **Cognitive skills:** Deductive reasoning and problem solving, attention

For a free list of more than 30 games and the skills they strengthen, visit www.unlocktheeinsteinside.com. For more information about LearningRx, visit www.LearningRx.com.

The Holiday Gift of Time

by Susan M. Quiring



Your preschoolers' part in the preparation can be trimming their own small tree. Let each twin wrap a gift for Grandma, make a card for Dad, and help stir the cookies, too.

If your twins are school age, organize your holiday activities so you can be available when they come home from school. Results from a research project show why.

Two groups of children were examined. The group who came home from school to an empty house gave no reports when their mothers returned at the end of the day and asked what happened in school. The second group, whose mothers were home upon the twins' arrival, bubbled immediately about the day's events. Three hours

later, school events are no longer important to retell.

HOLIDAY PLANNING

Family togetherness, including being there when the twins come home from school, takes pre-planning. At the beginning of the holiday season, try making a list of activities on a large appointment calendar. Include shopping trips with smaller children, parties, holiday programs, the day for tree buying and trimming, and even gift wrapping, and cookie-baking sessions. Being able to see the holiday season at a glance will help coordinate family plans.

Your twins may want to help wrap packages more if they are allowed to be creative, each in their own way. Large, hard-to-wrap packages can be wrapped in plain newspapers and topped with a bright bow. For more colorful packaging, use the comics section of the newspaper with a matching or contrasting color bow. Along with ribbons and bows, add candy canes, small toys, or holly to

During the winter holidays, it's easy to get so busy with the shopping, baking, cleaning, and decorating that you forget to spend quality time together with your whole family. Recently, a mother of twins slowed down her pace because of one of her son's comments. In the midst of her whirlwind of activities, he voiced an important need saying, "Mom, I wish you had more time so we could do things with you!"

This mother realized she had provided plenty of "time passers" for her children, but each left them out of her activities. It's very important to make this holiday season a family time, she decided.

Organization may be the key to doing that successfully. Make a list of what needs to be done, when it will be done, and who will do it. If you have 6-12 year olds, let them accept some of the responsibilities; they usually won't mind if it means you'll have more time together as a family.

decorate your packages. Your twins can make their own wrapping paper by using white-out to make polka-dots on brown paper gift wrap, or they can wrap gifts in a old road map.

Let your twins delight in learning new skills and using their imaginations. Try these **5 suggestions** to make holiday memories with your twins that last longer than the season itself:

1. Cooke Cutter Creativity. Give your preschoolers a paper plate or plastic tray topped with a folded paper towel and a bowl with a few spoonfuls of tempera paint. Let them dip cookie cutters into the paint and make prints on a piece of paper to create wrapping paper or holiday cards.

Try a cookie cutter matching game. Trace around the cookie cutter on a heavy piece of paper with marking pens. Let your twins match the cutters to the shapes drawn.

2. Cookie Cutter Ornaments. Your twins can make cookie cutter ornaments for your tree with you by mixing together 2 cups of flour, ½ cup salt and ¾ cup water. Stir and form into a ball. Knead dough 3 to 4 times. Roll the dough out flat on waxed paper. Cut out the shapes with the cookie cutters and place them on a baking sheet. Poke a hole in the top of each with a straw. Let the ornaments dry in a 300 degree oven for 1 hour (longer if the dough is thick). Paint the ornaments when they come out of the oven; before the paint dries; let each child sprinkle on some glitter. (To preserve the ornaments spray with a clear fixative.)



3. Holiday Books. A wonderful winter tradition is creating your own family holiday book in a large scrapbook. Each year, gather the whole family together to spend one evening placing photos and the description of holiday activities in a book. Save special letters, cards and other mementos to include. One mother of twins says that even her adult twins pull the scrapbook out each year and reminisce about their holiday memories as children. A special help to family members all year round is a Wish book, which gives each twin a chance to individualize his/her desires. Prepare a medium-sized notebook with a section for each person in the family to list clothing sizes, items needed and wanted, as well as hobbies.

4. Holiday Placemats. Cut a piece of cardboard placemat size, cover with colorful red or green wrapping paper, select old Christmas cards and cut them into desired shapes. Paste the cards on the placemat and cover with contact paper, a heavy plastic bag that can be heat sealed or laminate them.

5. Snowman Centerpiece. Make sure you double the recipe and plan space to display two snowmen if both twins are involved in the creative process.

½ cup butter or margarine

1-16 oz package miniature marshmallows

1 teaspoon salt

20 cups of popped popcorn

Black hat

Candy for face and buttons

Melt butter or margarine in large saucepan over low heat, or in microwave. Add marshmallows and salt, stirring until completely

melted, about three minutes. Remove from heat. Pour over popped corn and stir until well coated.

While mixture is still warm, shape with buttered fingers into large ball, medium ball and small ball. To secure balls on top of one another form small "bowl" in top of bottom ball and bump on bottom of middle ball. Do the same for two top balls. When balls are put together, the bumps fill the bowls and hold the balls in place. Decorate with top hat, candy face and buttons.

Make Christmas trees or wreaths by substituting puffed rice cereal for popcorn and adding green food coloring to the marshmallows and butter mixture.

Make a habit of making the most of each moment, not just at the holidays, but during the entire year. Look for fun, innovative ways to enjoy every activity. Spend time, not money, to make life more interesting and fun. Being the organized person that you are by now, effective use of time will become easier and easier. ♥

Susan M. Quiring, Ph.D., was formerly a home economist for the Johnson County Extension Council of Kansas State University.

Attention Readers: Send us photos of your twins in action doing any of these suggested holiday activities and we may include your photo in an upcoming issue of TWINS™ Magazine. Email your photos to artdirector@twinsmagazine.com and include **Holiday Fun** in the subject line.



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Special Lessons about Fraternal Twins

by Barry E. McNamara, Ed.D.
And Francine J. McNamara

In our own personal experience as parents of twins and in our interactions with innumerable parents of twins, it is clear that, although well intentioned, most school personnel know little about twins. For example, in cases in which twins look alike, many administrators and teachers will insist that they are identical; in cases in which they don't look alike, these individuals often comment that "they don't even look like brothers (or sisters)." Although opposite-sex twins clearly don't look exactly alike (genetically, they are no more similar than any brother or sister), comparisons and contrasts are often made.

It is imperative that parents let their children's teachers know that they expect their children to be treated as individuals. One of the most obvious ways to highlight their individual differences is to dress them in different clothes. By dressing their children similarly, parents are reinforcing the notion that they should be thought of as "one".

SEPARATE OR SAME CLASSES

Another simple step that helps teachers treat twins as individuals is to place them in separate classes whenever it is an opportune class placement decision for each co-twin. (Some special circumstances do arise in which co-twins are best placed together). We have written on this extensively in past issues of TWINS™ Magazine, but it bears repeating. Separate classes enhance the chances to individualize the school experience. Children have their own classmates, their own teachers, their own assignments, etc. Parents will find that there will be comparisons made even when their children are in separate classes, so putting them in the same class only exacerbates the situation.

Once parents have established their guidelines for how they want their children treated in an educational setting, they will find most school personnel very cooperative. By being advocates for their twins, parents will help ensure their academic and social-emotional growth.



OPPOSITE-SEX TWINS

All children should be valued for their unique abilities. Frequently, opposite-sex twins will develop at different rates, and unfair comparisons will be made. There is research that suggests that in the early years of school, female fraternal twins may be more proficient socially, intellectually, and physically than their brothers. It is very important that comparisons and labeling of their behavior be avoided. Comments such as, "She does so much better in school than her brother," or "you know how girls are; they just love school." Can become a credo for the way fraternal male twins approach learning.

There is considerable documentation in the professional literature regarding the varying performance of males and females on tasks of special mental abilities. Parents may see a certain pattern evidenced in these test results, such as females excelling in verbal skills and males in spatial ability and mathematical reasoning. Once again, it is important not to reinforce the differences per se, but rather to appreciate co-twins' individual differences.

We are not suggesting that parents search for differences, but merely note that they may occur and that parents should be aware of them. Nor are we suggesting that parents reinforce gender stereotypes. These patterns may or may not present themselves. By treating each twin as an individual, parents can avoid unfair and dangerous comparisons that frequently happen with opposite-sex twins.

SAME-SEX FRATERNAL TWINS

Diversity among fraternal twins must be appreciated. In the school setting, same-sex fraternal twins who look alike may be compared. Teachers may wonder why one does so much better in reading than the other, or why one twin has a learning disability and his co-twin doesn't. Parents should not be surprised by differences between their co-twins, or lack thereof—genetically, they are no more alike than any two singleton sisters or brothers, as noted above.

Teachers should be made aware of the fact that each child is to be viewed as performing on his own level and should not be treated in the same manner as his brother or sister. However, they should also be made aware that they are twins and do share a very special bond, despite their individual differences.

The professional literature appears to lack support for strong evidence that same-sex fraternal twins perform similarly or very differently, or that they are very close to each other or not very close to each other. For parents, this may be confusing, but when educating such children, the implication is clear—treat them as individuals and disregard any preconceived notions about how twins are alike.

In the case of same-sex twins who don't look alike, parents may feel that they should accentuate their similarities so they will be perceived as twins by school personnel and others. We know of parents who focus on all the areas in which their fraternal twins are alike and consequently fail to recognize their unique strengths.

Let's face it; parents of twins receive a great deal of attention and reinforcement—as do twins themselves. And when a couple has twins, but no one recognizes them as such, they may, understandably, feel a little let down. However, parents need to know that by treating co-twins as individuals, as well as recognizing the bond that may exist between them; they are enabling each child to achieve his or her own potential. School personnel need to be kept apprised of parents' preferences in the education geared to his or her individual needs.

Parents of fraternal twins face issues that are similar to all parents of twins, yet there are differences. Twins who look alike may not perform alike, and opposite-sex twins may perform differently in particular areas. And there are numerous variations on the above.

Knowing that this is true, one must respect the diversity between twins and appreciate their individuality in order to help each co-twin reach his or her full potential. ♥

Barry E. McNamara, Ed.D., was a former associate professor of education at Dowling College, Long Island, New York. Francine J. McNamara, MSW, CSW, was a school social worker in Mill Neck, New York and ran a private practice. They are proud parents of identical twin daughters.

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“They’re Identical? No Way!”

by Nancy L. Segal

Identical twin partners, on average, show greater physical similarity than do any other pair of relatives. It is, however, a common misconception that the physical characteristics of identical twins (such as height, weight or hand preference) are always exactly the same. There are many observable differences between identical twins that have been documented in the scientific literature, some of which are more apparent than others.

Identical twins also vary with respect to how identical they appear to others and to themselves. Some identical twins and their families are persuaded that the twins are not identical, despite the fact that other people confuse them. This may be explained by

Nancy L Segal, Ph.D., is an associate professor in the department of psychology and is the Director of Twin Studies at California State University, Fullerton.

the increased sensitivity of twins and their close relatives to subtle differences between them (such as slight differences in expressivity, or differences in facial markings such as birth marks or moles.)

Individuals outside the twinship may readily distinguish between some twin partners, but may have difficulty distinguishing between other twin pairs. The uncertainty

of some twins and their families with respect to true twin type may be associated with contradictions between medical reports and their own observations.

A SIMPLE MATTER OF CAUSE AND EFFECT

The source of physical differences between identical twins is almost always environmental in origin. This is because identical twins share 100 percent of their genes, having formed from the division of a single fertilized egg. There are, however, various intrauterine environmental events that may be associated with differences in appearance. In fact, when the various sources of differences are considered, it seems somewhat surprising that most identical twins are as alike as they are.

Delayed splitting of the fertilized egg has been associated with reversals in some anatomical traits in identical twins. They include direction of hair whorl (clockwise or counter-clock-wise); fingerprint patterns (lines on the left-hand of one twin mirror the lines on the right hand of his co-twin); handedness (one is left-handed, the other right-handed); facial asymmetries (such as larger eye on opposite sides of the face); and dental patterns (opposite cross-bites). Any combination of these reversals may be observed depending upon the timing and location of the split. Processes associated with splitting have also been associated with more extreme twin differences in physical features. In some cases, one member of an identical twin pair may display cleft lip and palate, or spina bifida (failure of the neural tube to close), while the twin partner will be unaffected.

In some cases, twin fetuses may receive unequal nutritional supplies from the mother. When the situation is not severe, this could possibly result in slight differences in size. When the situation



becomes more extreme, such as in cases of a detached placenta, more obvious differences may be apparent. As a graduate student, I identified such a case involving identical twin females. At age 8 years, these sisters showed a height difference of five inches and a weight difference of nine pounds.

The fetal transfusion syndrome, or shared blood circulation, also called Twin-to-Twin-Transfusion Syndrome (TTTS) is another prenatal condition that has been associated with twin differences in health characteristics. There are two forms of this condition, chronic and acute. The chronic condition involves blood transfusion between identical twins who share a chorion, the outer membrane surrounding each fetus. Marked discrepancies in size, or even death to one or both fetuses, may result. Elizabeth M. Bryan, MD at the Queen Charlotte’s and Chelsea Hospital in London, England, explains that the donor twin is typically the smaller twin whose development is checked by a loss of nutrients.

In contrast, the acute form of the condition occurs during labor and also affects identical twins who share a chorion. The twins may, however, be of similar birth weight. Immediate treatment of both twins is usually required to avoid cardiac failure.

It is well known that identical twins show larger birth weight differences, on average, than fraternal twins. This finding may be associated, in part, with the various prenatal influences cited above which uniquely affect identical twins.

ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

I was associated with the Minnesota Study of Twins Reared Apart from 1982 to 1991. It was striking to observe the various physical differences between some identical twins that were associated with differences in their rearing. I recall a pair of identical females who differed in the extent to which they had received medical attention as children. One twin had, for example, undergone orthodontic procedures, while her co-twin had not. This difference led to subtle variations in their facial structure.

Places of residence can also contribute to identical twin differences in appearance. Differential exposure to sunlight can differentially alter the tone and quality of skin. This can, in some cases, cause one twin to look older than the other. Similar effects can be achieved in the event that one twin smokes and the other does

not. Adult female twins also tend to show greater weight differences than adult male twins. Interestingly, adult male twins reared apart are as similar in weight as adult male twins reared together. Weight differences between female twins have been explained with reference to differences in pregnancy, dietary habits and/or exercise program.

“I GOTTA BE ME”

Adolescence is a period when individuals may confront issues involving their identities, and may be tempted to experiment with new styles of dress, activities, friends, etc. Certainly, some identical twin adolescents face such situations, although differentiation from their co-twins may pose additional issues. Some co-twins may prefer to emphasize (or even create) physical differences between them, by means of hairstyle or dress. Such differences may persist or may disappear with time, depending upon life history events and the twins' particular personalities.

Psychological studies demonstrate that identical twins tend to make similar choices regarding dress and lifestyle, so that similarities in appearance may be likely, following divergence during adolescence. This may be especially true if twins begin living apart due to different educational or occupational opportunities; if the twin partner is not continually present, then the need to appear different may no longer be present.

IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

Several years ago, I compared mothers' accuracy in judging twin type with indices provided by various physical measures, such as blood type. 14% of the parents provided opinions that were inconsistent with the twins' final classification as identical or fraternal. This finding may be explained in part, by the enhanced sensitivity of parents to subtle physical differences between identical twins. My research indicated that a twin researcher who is unfamiliar with the twins is a more accurate judge of twin type than a parent.

Just as some identical twins appear to be more alike than others, some identical twins will enjoy looking more alike than others. This attitude should be respected

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WHY IDENTICALS AREN'T ALWAYS “IDENTICAL”

- A common misconception is that the physical characteristics of identical twins (such as height, weight or hand preference) are always exactly the same.
- The source of physical differences between identical twins is almost always environmental in origin. This is because identical twins share 100 percent of their genes, having formed from the division of a single fertilized egg.
- Delayed splitting of the fertilized egg has been associated with reversals in some anatomical traits in identical twins including direction of hair whorl; fingerprint patterns; handedness; facial asymmetries; and dental patterns.
- In some cases, one member of an identical twin pair may even display cleft lip and palate, or spina bifida (failure of the neural tube to close), while the twin partner will be unaffected.
- Twin fetuses may receive unequal nutritional supplies from the mother; and, depending on the severity of the problem, this can result in slight or marked physical differences between identical twins.
- Identical twins show larger birth weight differences, on average, than fraternal twins.
- Some rare cases of genetic differences exist between identical twin partners. It can happen that, after fertilization, the chromosomes may fail to assort properly, resulting in identical twins with marked physical differences.
- Many adolescent twins prefer to emphasize (or even create) physical differences between them, by means of hairstyle or dress, to increase their recognition as individuals.
- Psychological studies demonstrate that adult identical twins tend to make similar choices regarding dress and lifestyle, so that similarities in appearance may be likely, following divergence during adolescence.
- Accidents or illnesses may sometimes impose physical differences on identical twins.

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When Adult Twins Both Suffer from Crohn's Disease

by Jason Peach

In the case of identical twins, it is not uncommon for them to share food likes and dislikes, musical tastes, or even an interest in the same sports. Another thing they can share, however, is a chronic illness. At 33, and a CFO of a credit union, I've been a longtime sufferer of Crohn's disease (CD), a serious chronic, inflammatory disease of the gastrointestinal (GI) tract and one that affects more than one million people in North America and Europe. My twin brother, Robert, who lives in Florida, also has the disease.

Jason Peach is married with two daughters ages 3 and 7 and resides in St. Charles, MO

I was diagnosed with Crohn's in 1994, when I was a senior in high school. Robert had been diagnosed with the disease 8 years earlier.

For Robert, an engineer whose condition has always been more severe than mine, it took much longer for my parents to determine what was going on with him and during that time, his symptoms took a real toll on his body, forcing him to have his first colon surgery at the age of 19.

Crohn's disease affects people of all ages but it is primarily a disease of adolescents and young adults, affecting mainly those between 15 and 40. Common symptoms of the disease include diarrhea, cramping, abdominal pain, weight loss, fever, and in some cases, rectal bleeding. When I began having abdominal pain and blood in my stool, my parents scheduled a

colonoscopy. My physician then started me on a drug regimen plus prednisone. I thought my disease was under control when I started college and in late 1998, I took a break from my medications. I got married shortly after graduation and moved back to my hometown of Atlanta.

In 1999, however, my symptoms returned. I also began to feel weak and tired and no longer had the energy to exercise. I went back on the medications but they were not all that effective and I wasn't thrilled about being on prednisone the rest of my life due to the side effects. I felt as if I wasn't in control of my life anymore. I always had to make sure there was a bathroom nearby. I worried that my boss would have to start adjusting my full-time work schedule to accommodate my condition.

Not only was exercising no longer possible, eating and sleeping also became more problematic. It was at this point, in 2002, that my gastroenterologist suggested that I enroll in a clinical trial for a new drug called HUMIRA. Wanting a chance at living a normal life, I enrolled in a blind clinical trial and was not told whether I was receiving HUMIRA or a placebo.

I believe I was on HUMIRA from the start, however, since I noticed relief immediately. Within a few months, I was able to return to eating normally and sleeping better. No longer feeling weak and fatigued, I was also able to return to my job and working out



In order from left to right: Robert Peach, Jack (Robert's son), and Jason Peach.

without interruption. What's especially great is that I can now eat what I want, even spicy, Mexican food, which used to be verboten. It was such a relief to get my life back to normal. For the last seven years, I haven't felt the impact of my disease.

My twin brother, Robert, has also tried a number of medications that offered little or no relief and has had two surgeries. He recently started on HUMIRA and hopes to experience the same positive results as mine. Robert is active in the **Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America** (CCFA), volunteering for activities such as camp counselor at a summer camp for kids and teenagers with Inflammatory Bowel Disorder (IBD) and speaking at fundraisers. He currently co-facilitates a CCFA support group in Brevard County, Florida.

The main message I would like to convey to everyone who has Crohn's disease is that you do not need to suffer in silence. You do not need to live in pain. Keep being persistent; be open to trying new things. If you are proactive, you can get ahead of your condition. Having a twin brother that experienced the same symptoms I was having helped me get an early diagnosis and also realize what I needed to do to get this disease under control. Now I am helping him and we are living a relatively normal life with this disease. ♥



Research continued from page 33

on the part of family members and others. Of course, accidents or illnesses may sometimes impose physical differences on identical twins. It is, however, possible to enjoy the benefits of identical twinship even in the absence of identical physical identity. As important advantage of identical twinship is the support and understanding that are often uniquely available from this specialized partnership and bond. ♥

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Mailbox continued from page 35



legislation on separation of multiples in schools and are fighting for families' rights! You can check out a website that gives you updates on all the laws being passed all over the US at www.twinslaw.com. We also have several articles on our website including sample letters that you can use as a guideline. Here is the link: <http://www.twinsmagazine.com/twins-school>.

Dear Editor,

My girlfriend and I live quite an alternative lifestyle. As you probably noticed, I said girlfriend, not wife. We have a beautiful 18-month-old daughter and are expecting twin boys in October. We are receiving lots of flack from our primary care provider for our choice of birth for our twins. They say that the types of twins we are having which are sharing the same placenta are very high risk for TTTS and other "disorders". We are having a natural birth just as our daughter was born. However, this time around, with twins, they will not let us carry on a normal, natural birth in a hospital. We have been left with the only option of a home birth, which sounds exciting and is everything I would want, if the doctors had not gotten to me with the "high risk" idea. One OBGYN actually told us that at least one of our babies would die if we tried to have a natural birth. At first I was outraged, and then I started becoming paranoid. My girlfriend seems to think everything will still be fine, I believe her, I just have an aching paranoia now. Do you have any info that could help ease my mind?

Best Regards,
Ryan C Brakefield, Ridgefield, WA
Via email

Editor's Note: Ryan, many parents that are pregnant with twins that share the same placenta are at risk for Twin-to-Twin-Transfusion Syndrome or TTTS. There are two national nonprofit organizations dedicated to raising awareness and lending support for families just like you. They are the TTTS Foundation (www.tttfoundation.org — see more about them in this issue) and the Fetal Hope Foundation (www.fetalhope.org).



Continued from page 11

PREGNANCY

As early in pregnancy as possible, it is advisable for an expectant mother to consult her obstetrical caregiver about the signs of preterm labor. Also, it is helpful for her to discuss what to do if she has a concern or is she thinks she may be going into premature labor. She should find out if she should call her physician first or go immediately to the hospital's labor and delivery unit. ♥

The TTTS Foundation Celebrates 20 Years of Helping Families



On December 7, 1989 Mary Slaman-Forsythe, of Bay Village, Ohio, gave birth to her identical twin sons, Matthew Steven and Steven James. Matthew was born into a room of applause. Steven was born into a room of silence. Steven passed away from Twin-to-Twin-Transfusion Syndrome (TTTS). Mary held her babies that night and promised them that they would be known and remembered and that she would find the answers to how this could have happened. Mary was devastated by the tremendous loss of Steven and the negligent medical care she received after being diagnosed with TTTS at 18 weeks gestation.



Since then, she has devoted her life to making sure that no other mother has to experience what she did. The TTTS Foundation is solely dedicated to fighting TTTS. This is a promise kept.

Mary, along with the help from her son Matthew, her family, devoted volunteers, and world renowned specialists in TTTS that serve on the Foundation's medical advisory board, has directly helped over 10,000 women diagnosed with TTTS. The priority of the TTTS Foundation is to educate parents and help to save their babies lives.

When a parent contacts the Foundation, Mary speaks with them by phone to explain TTTS, the **15 Most Important Questions to ask** (see side bar) and provides encouragement so parents have hope and are empowered with a plan. With the help of 12 trained national support volunteers, all parents are supported and followed through their pregnancy full circle from diagnosis to delivery. Remaining programs include Circle of Care (helping parents travel for treatment or other related expenses), NICU, Special Needs, and Bereavement Support.

All women who become pregnant with multiples need to know how crucial it is to find out chorionicity, whether there is one placenta or two, within the first three months of pregnancy. If there is one placenta, monochorionic, then TTTS is a risk until all babies are delivered. Please don't be afraid of TTTS, but learn whether you are at risk and make sure you have weekly ultrasounds with a high risk Perinatologist from 16 weeks through delivery if your babies share a single placenta (see sidebar).

To help increase awareness of TTTS and raise money for The TTTS Foundation to continue its mission and programs, the **2nd annual Matthew and Steven TTTS Walk for the Babies** will be held December 7, 2009 on **World TTTS Awareness Day**, a part of **World TTTS Awareness Month**.

Parents from all over the world can create personalized online fundraising pages about their babies, including photos and videos, and promote their page to their family, friends and coworkers who can then make online donations. Participants raise money through the end of December and walk in their hometowns December 7th any way they wish. World TTTS Awareness Day also includes a Candlelight Vigil to honor and remember babies who have died from TTTS. The Vigil begins at 5:10PM for the recipient babies and 5:15PM for the donors in all time zones. This creates a wave of light, love and hope across the world. To learn more about the walk and other ways to get involved in December's TTTS Awareness Month, please go to www.worldtttsawareness-day.org. Please get involved and let your voice be heard! Anyone can walk and set up a fundraising page and we need your help.

Mary explains, "I personally know the horror of TTTS and my son Matthew knows the pain of losing his identical twin." Mary believes that there is no greater cause in the multiples community than fighting this devastating disease and there are no excuses for the medical community not to make TTTS awareness and treatment a priority.

"The babies can make it and we will fight for them and their families so that no matter what happens, they will know they did everything they could to save them. I hope and pray that everyone reading this article will get involved with The TTTS Foundation and make a difference in the lives of these precious babies. Please don't wait another day," adds Mary. Please go to www.tttsfoundation.org for more information or to volunteer to help. ♥





Mary and her son Matthew

THE TTTS FOUNDATION'S 15 MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

Confirm at First Ultrasound (Hopefully by 12 Weeks)

1. Is the placenta monochorionic?
2. Are the babies the same sex?
3. Can you see the dividing membrane?
4. Is the placenta anterior or posterior?
5. Do the cords have 3 vessels or 2?
6. Are the cords fully attached to the placenta?

Ask at Weekly Ultrasounds (Starting at Week 16 to Delivery)

7. What is the largest vertical pocket of fluid for each baby?
8. Can you see the bladder of the donor baby?
9. What are the weights of the babies in grams?
(every 2-3 weeks)
10. Are the Dopplers normal for both babies?
11. Is the heart of the recipient baby enlarged or thickened?
12. Does the recipient baby have hydrops?
13. What is the measurement of your cervix, is it long and closed or thinning or dilated?
14. Is the smaller baby growing at the same rate?
15. What is the fundal height?



WHAT IS TTTS?

- Twin to twin transfusion syndrome (TTTS) is a disease of the placenta (or afterbirth) that affects identical twin pregnancies.
- TTTS affects identical twins (or higher multiple gestations) who share a common monochorionic placenta.
- The shared placenta contains abnormal blood vessels which connect the umbilical cord and circulations of the twins.
- The common placenta may also be shared unequally by the twins
- The events in pregnancy that lead to TTTS are all random.
- TTTS is not hereditary or genetic, nor caused by anything the parents did or did not do.
- TTTS can happen to anyone and is life-threatening to all multiple babies until the last cord is clamped at delivery
- There is about a 1 out of 1000 chance of having TTTS in any given pregnancy and at least a 15% for monochorionic twin/triplet pregnancies.



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Survivor Story...

One Family's Tale of TTTS



by Caitlin Smith

Our girls are survivors of Twin-to-Twin Transfusion Syndrome (TTTS), a disease of the placenta that affects identical twin pregnancies. It occurs when blood and nutrients are not passed equally from the mother to both babies, with one twin receiving a disproportionate amount of the fluid due to the way the blood vessels were formed in the placenta. This causes stress on both the twin receiving too little fluid, as well as the twin receiving too much fluid, and is usually fatal to one or both twins.



One baby, the "recipient" twin, gets too much blood overloading her cardiovascular system, and may die from heart failure. The other baby, the "donor" twin or "stuck" twin, does not get enough blood and may die from severe anemia.

We were 16 weeks pregnant with identical twins when we went in for a routine ultrasound. The doctor told us about TTTS and warned us that our twins may have this syndrome.

She provided us with some websites to research for more information, and asked us to come back in a week for a follow-up appointment.

When we returned the following week, the diagnosis was confirmed – our girls had Twin-to-Twin Transfusion Syndrome. We were told of the possibility that one, if not both of the twins, could perish. After years of trying to get pregnant and a previous miscarriage, we were overwhelmed with the possibility that we might lose our precious twins. An operation was our best hope for their survival



– it might save one of the twins. But at that time, the procedure was only performed in two places in the country, Washington and Florida. We began researching these clinics and thinking about making the trip from Colorado. We resolved to do everything within

our control to make sure our babies were as healthy as possible.

The doctors felt like the first step was an amniotic reduction to reduce the amount of fluid that Twin B was receiving. Scheduled

for this procedure at week 18, we went in for the appointment, but the doctors decided to wait. We were in a holding pattern to see if the condition would improve on its own, however unlikely that seemed. We went in for ultrasounds two more times that week, but their condition continued to be borderline. The twins' health wasn't quite bad enough to risk doing the amniotic reduction so we went in for monitoring and ultrasounds three times each week from that point forward.

Twin A was the "donor" baby and Twin B was the "recipient". Twin A had about 35% of the amniotic fluid and was "stuck" whereas Twin B had the vast majority of the fluid. We watched with sinking hopes as Twin A's fluid became less and less apparent and Twin B started having kidney and heart problems as she tried to process overwhelming amounts of fluid. If only the time would pass quickly and we could make it to our goal of 24 weeks, when the twins might be viable for birth (28 weeks was our optimal goal when digestion and lungs would be fully developed). We didn't name the girls for a long time because we were really afraid that they would not survive.

I focused on resting whenever possible, which was hard because I had always led such an active lifestyle. I started a regimented diet that included large amounts of protein as we were told this might help. We tracked my protein intake every day, and if I hadn't met my quota of 100 grams for the day, my husband would practically force-feed me cottage cheese or protein shakes. He would even cut up protein bars and put them on my nightstand. Every time I got up to go to the bathroom in the middle of the night, which was often, he would remind me to eat one.

Making our first goal of 24 weeks gestation, I reduced my work hours to four days a week due to major edema. Around 26 weeks, the twins somehow shifted around and Twin A miraculously had a bit more fluid protecting her. We still had not picked names for the girls.



At 28 weeks, I quit working altogether due to the terrible swelling I was experiencing, along with carpal tunnel in both wrists and very high blood pressure. Scheduling different office visits was so difficult that in one week, I had six different appointments between the Perinatologist, the OB, physical therapy, massage and acupuncture. I also was supposed to sit in a swimming pool or hot tub three times a day to relieve the pressure and



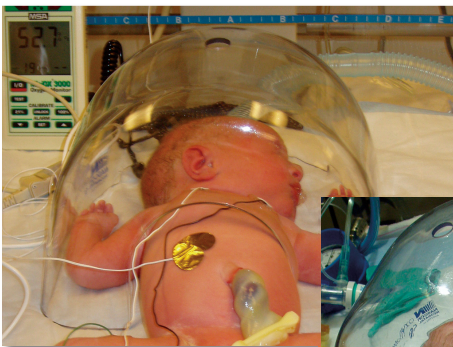
reduce swelling. I told my doctor I was bound and determined to make it to my scheduled C-section date at 37 weeks. He said if I made it to 32 weeks, it would be a

miracle. It was a couple weeks before Memorial Day, and I was due in the middle of July.

At 33 weeks, we finally picked names for the girls. Mikayla was Twin A and Madeline was Twin B. Memorial Day weekend came and went, and at 34 weeks, I was still pregnant. I went in for my next scheduled ultrasound with confidence in my ability to beat this condition. Unfortunately, at this visit there was no movement and labored breathing motions from Twin A. We were sent to the hospital for an emergency C-section. At first we were in denial that the time had come and even asked the doctor if we could “wait and see” as we had been doing for the last 15 weeks. But sound medical advice prevailed and we were whisked off to the operating room.

Twin A (Mikayla) was born at 5 lbs 4 oz., and Twin B (Madeline) was 6 lbs 2 oz. – great healthy weights for twins who had been so sick for much of the pregnancy. Mikayla was pretty sick at first and took a bit of resuscitating after birth to get her breathing consistent. Her skin was a terrible dusky blue, and the doctors wouldn’t even show her to me – they just whisked her over to the table where the neo-natal team was waiting for her. Madeline was born just two minutes later and she was a very bright red color (what I mistakenly assumed was a healthy red skin tone). Now I know that Madeline’s skin was red due to the disproportionate amount of red blood cells she received due to the Twin-to-Twin Transfusion Syndrome. The

first time they were placed together after their birth, they grabbed each other’s hands and held onto each other tightly.



A couple minutes after birth, Madeline took a turn for the worse. I watched her struggling to breathe. Her poor abdomen was rapidly rising and falling in what looked like desperate gasps for oxygen. Both twins began receiving supplemental oxygen shortly after birth, but then pretty quickly were moved to little oxygen hoods. Mikayla recovered enough to not need oxygen after that, but Madeline’s health deteriorated to

the point where she had to be put on a respirator. Ironically, the twin that was so sick in utero was so much healthier, stronger and feistier outside of the womb and was released (or “kicked out”) of the NICU much sooner than her “womb-mate” who had hogged up all the fluid on the inside.

In the NICU, Mikayla kept pulling out her IVs demonstrating her determination, stubbornness and strong will. She received a



terrible burn on her hand when she dislodged the IV and some of the fluid burned her skin. Finally the NICU nurses stuck an IV in her head and said if she pulled that one out, she would be sent home. Well she did – we walked in to a bloody mess one day after Mikayla pulled the IV out of her head and blood was everywhere. We took her home with us that day.

Thanks to the wonderful NICU nurses, we learned how to care for our preemie twins. Our only disappointment was that the girls weren’t allowed to be together in the NICU. Seeing Mikayla’s behavior with her own IVs, the nurses were worried that Mikki would pull Maddie’s respirator tube out of her throat or her IV out of her belly button.

After 12 long days in the NICU, Madeline came home. She was on oxygen for a while, but the girls were both healthy! Today they are three and a half years old and you can’t tell that they were ever so sick. ♥



Caitlin Foegen Smith, MSW, works part time for the Division of Child Welfare at the Colorado Department of Human Services. She also works to maintain the peace in a family of five, as a mom to 5 year old identical twin girls and a 3 ½ year old boy. She is a freelance writer who details her experiences with the three children in a satirical way. Her website is www.kidsofsmith.com

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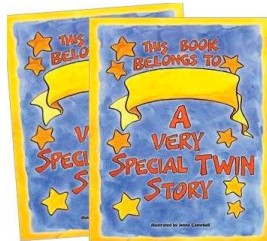
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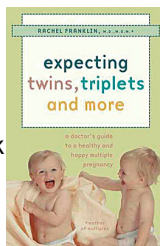
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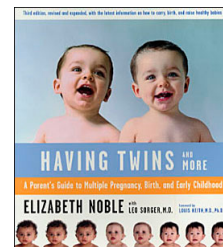


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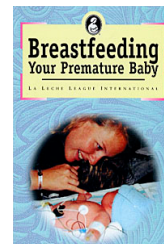
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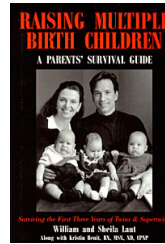
has completely revised and updated the best-selling La Leche League International book "Mothering Multiples" into a comprehensive guide for new and experienced mothers. Emphasizing the positive aspects of mothering, the author covers many topics related to expertly raising multiple children. Effective breastfeeding preparations and techniques are examined in detail, including tools and goals, diet and nutrition before childbirth, preparing for birth, understanding the NICU, comforting fussy babies, managing sleep, adjusting to the arrival of multiples and parenting toddler multiples. Book is illustrated and includes resource guide, appendix and index. 432 pages, softbound

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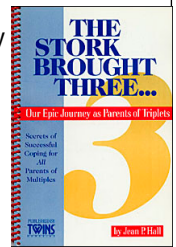
a survival guide to a new life with demanding, lovable multiples. It includes information on many critical topics, ranging from announcing a pregnancy at work, managing unwanted advice, considering minivans, accepting and organizing volunteer help, surrendering a house to babies, handling personal questions from complete strangers, finding inexpensive toys and handling strange odors and visits from grandparents. This couple has developed an encouraging and fully entertaining guide to the basics of raising babies born in batches. Includes information and support guide. 240 pages, hardbound



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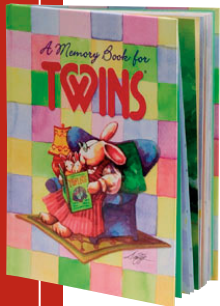


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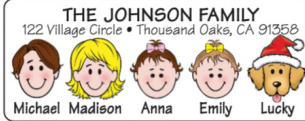
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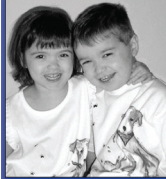
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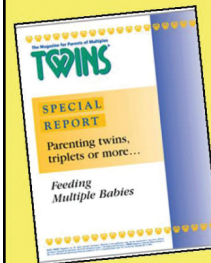
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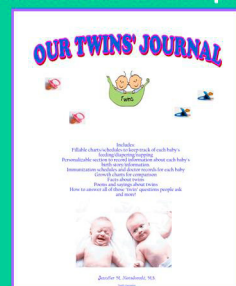
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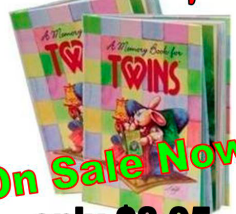
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Double Takes

Can you guess whether the twins pictured on these pages are identical or fraternal? Send us your photos for the Doubletakes section at least three months prior to publication. All photos sent to TWINS™ Magazine become the property of TWINS™ Magazine and will not be returned. Photos should be accompanied by a signed photo release form that can be downloaded by visiting www.TwinsMagazine.com and by clicking on the Doubletakes Photos button. By submitting your photos to TWINS™ Magazine via U.S. Mail or electronically you are releasing your rights to these photos for our use. Please note that we cannot use any professional photographs. On the back of your photos include an address label & phone number with your twins' names and ages along with their twin type (identical or fraternal). Send photographs to: TWINS™ Doubletakes ATTN: TWINS™ Magazine, P.O. Box 271924, Fort Collins, CO 80527-1924.



1 Abigail & Elizabeth
17 mos.
Lubbock, TX



4 Luci & Seth
4 yrs
Dothan, AL



5 Levi & Anabel
3 mos.
Warren, ME



6 Ava & Olivia
4 yrs,
Gibsonia, PA



10 Caleb & Connor
2 mos.
North Port, FL



11 Leigh & Aaliyah
4 yrs.
Corinth, MS



12 Jacob & Beckton
22 mos.
Ceilbent, AZ



16 Cara & Makena
8 mos.
Millington, MD



17 Jordan & Jenna
3 yrs.
Virginia Beach, VA



18 Jack & Cade
10 mos.
Bath, PA

Holiday 2009



2

Braxton & Daxton
2 yrs
Casper, UT



3

Anisa & Anaya
6 mos.
Palm Coast, FL



7

Blake & Brady
5 mos.
Dearborn, MI



8

Nathan & Jonathan,
2 yrs.
Port Jervis, NY



9

Jack & Jenna
2 ½ yrs.
Beulah, ND



13

Liam & Peyton
5 mos.
Astoria, NY



14

Colin & Dylan
4 yrs.
Princeton, KY



15

Charlie & Olivia
6 mos.
El Dorado Hills, CA



19

Niko & Kyle
20 mos.
Durham, NC



20

Ireland & Ava
3 yrs.
Highlands Ranch, CO

Based on Parental Reports:

1 - ID-G	5 - FR-BG	9 - FR-BG	13 - FR-BB	17 - FR-GG
2 - ID-BB	6 - FR-BG	10 - FR-BB	14 - UNK-BB	18 - ID-BB
3 - ID-GG	7 - ID-BB	11 - ID-GG	15 - FR-BG	19 - FR-BB
4 - FR-BG	8 - UNK-BB	12 - FR-BB	16 - FR-GG	20 - FR-GG

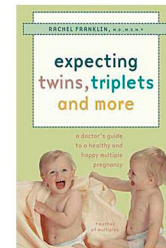
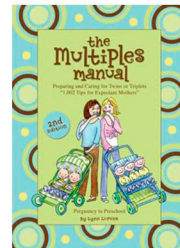
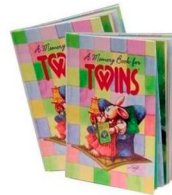
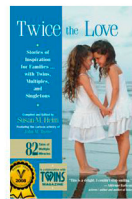
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