

The Magazine for Multiples Since 1984

TWINSTM

**Our Annual
Holiday Gift Guide
is here!**

www.TwinsMagazine.com



**TTTS:
Get the
Facts!**

**PREMATURITY
Is It Preventable?**

Educational Toys?

**Tips on
Spending
One-On-One
Time with
Each Twin!**

Holiday 2012

Columns:

Mom-2-Mom _____ 8
10 Lessons to Teach by *Bonnie Z. Dowd*

Raising Twins through Each Age & Stage



Pregnant with Twins—
Prematurity...Is It Preventable?
by *Leslie Montgomery* _____ 10



Infant Twins—10 Things Every Parent of Twins Should Know During Babies First Months
by *Cara Krenn* _____ 12



Toddler Twins—Comforting Solutions to Pacifier Problems
by *Janet Gonzalez-Mena* _____ 14



Preschool Twins—Which Would Your Children Choose?
by *Patricia Edmister* _____ 16

Tales from Twins _____ 30
Mixed Chorus by *Jacqueline Davidson Kopito and Amy Davidson Lombardo*

LOL: Laugh out Loud _____ 37
Just Once by *Sandra Johnson*



Cover photo taken by Alicia Smith of JAS Photography (www.jasphotography.ca)

On the Cover:

Owen and Mya, now age 2½ years old, were only six months old when this holiday photo was taken. These adorable cuties are full of energy and now talking up a storm! They love the outdoors, swimming and books. Owen is “all boy” he loves any sort of vehicle, anything with a motor and all sports. Mya is very girly; she loves her little dollies and taking care of anything or anyone. Big milestones they just reached are sleeping in a big bed and they are now potty trained!

Feature Articles:

Tips for Spending One-on-One Time with Each Twin by *Steven Jeffries* _____ 28

TTTS: Get the Facts on this Deadly Fetal Disorder That Kills More Babies than SIDS! by *Christa D. Reed* _____ 32

TTTS: Two Survival Stories by *ReNee Beau Bixler and Ashley Orosz* _____ 33



SPECIAL HOLIDAY SECTION

TWINS Magazine's Annual Holiday Gift Guide...Holiday Gifts for Everyone on Your List _____ 18

Educational Toys
by *Georgia Lewis* _____ 26

In Every Issue:

A Note from the Editor _____ 3

NEWS _____ 4

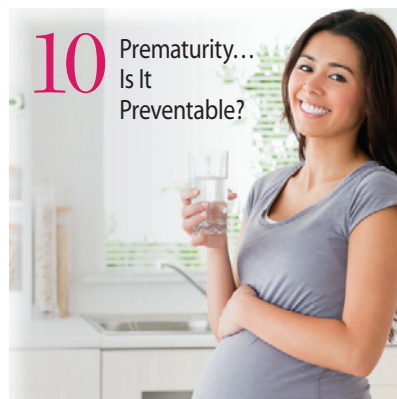
Product Preview Section _____ 31
All the latest & greatest products for parents & kids!

Double Takes _____ 34

12 10 Things Every Parent of Twins Should Know During Babies First Months



10 Prematurity... Is It Preventable?



14 Comforting Solutions to Pacifier Problems



18 TWINS Magazine's Annual Holiday Gift Guide...Holiday Gifts for Everyone on Your List



28 Tips for Spending One-on-One Time with Each Twin



Learning to Not Sweat the Small Stuff...



Raising kids these days is tough work. It's filled with so many ups and downs. It's challenging, exciting, heart-breaking, joyful, tiring, educational and amazing all at the same time... And, it's the best job I will ever have in my lifetime!

When my life gets over-scheduled, over-stressed and hard to handle with my four

boys (twins and two younger singletons) which it often does, it's sometimes difficult for me to remember how blessed I truly am. To even have the opportunity to experience all the wonderful (and not so wonderful) things motherhood brings to my life is such an amazing gift...in fact **THE MOST** amazing gift I could ever have. So why then do I get all stressed out over every little thing?

Starting this holiday season and into the new year, one of my main goals will be to concentrate more on everything that is important in life and focus less on distractions and the little things that don't matter and won't matter a year from now anyway. That is why I absolutely love the book by Richard Carlson called *"Don't Sweat the Small Stuff and It's All Small Stuff: Simple Ways to Keep the Little Things From Taking Over Your Life"*. This book makes so much sense to busy parents like us and it's easy to read with a ton of practical tips and advice inside its' small, paperback frame. With chapters entitled 'Make Peace with Imperfection'; 'Let Go of the Idea that Gentle, Relaxed People Can't Be Super Achievers' and 'Turn Your Melodrama into a Mellow-Drama' is advice to live by. Other chapters like 'Ask Yourself the Question, Will This Matter a Year from Now?'; 'Learn to Live in the Present Moment'; and 'Be the First One to Act Loving or Reach Out' clearly is a practical guideline when juggling all of the numerous roles we play in our lives. So this holiday season, take a "time-out" just for you and try practicing some of the tips in that book to help you eliminate the stressors in your life. Maybe then you can enjoy your parenting journey much more and begin to concentrate on making special

memories with your family that will last a life-time... So, join me in not sweating the small stuff because it is all just small stuff anyway, right?

We are very excited to bring you our Annual Holiday Gift Guide—our biggest one yet! that gives you ideas for everyone on your holiday list. Also, please be sure to read more about the Twin-to-Twin-Transfusion-Syndrome (TTTS) World Awareness Day coming up on December 7, 2012 and in a feature article learn the facts about TTTS, this deadly fetal disorder affecting identical twins in utero that kills more babies each year than AIDS! Also inside this issue we have included lots of practical advice and information just in time for the holidays including tips on ways to spend one-on-one time with each twin, buying educational toys, confronting pacifier problems and much, much more! We hope you enjoy all the wonder and magic of the holidays with your kids this season and wish you all the very best in the coming year!



Sincerely,

Christa D Reed

Christa Reed
Editor-in-Chief



TWINS™

**Volume 29 Number 5
Holiday 2012 Edition
Founded in 1984**

PUBLISHERS

William F. Cody, Jr.
bill@twinsmagazine.com
Regina Rubin Cody
gina@twinsmagazine.com
publisher@twinsmagazine.com

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Christa D. Reed
twinseditor@twinsmagazine.com

ART DIRECTOR

Michelle Kenny
artdirector@twinsmagazine.com

NATIONAL ADVERTISING DIRECTOR

Christa D. Reed
twinseditor@twinsmagazine.com

CUSTOMER SERVICE

William F. Cody, Jr.
bill@twinsmagazine.com

CIRCULATION

William F. Cody, Jr.
bill@twinsmagazine.com

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTORS

Holiday 2012

ReNee Beau Bixler; Bonnie Z. Dowd; Jacqueline Davidson Kopito; Amy Davidson Lombardo; Patricia Edmister; Janet Gonzalez-Mena; Steven Jeffries; Cara Krenn; Georgia Lewis; Leslie Montgomery; Askley Orosz; Christa D. Reed

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Sterling Investments I, LLC dba: TWINS™ Magazine
30799 Pinetree Road, #256
Cleveland, OH, 44124
Tel: 1-888-55-TWINS (toll-free)
www.TwinsMagazine.com

Owned and Published by:

Sterling Investments I, LLC dba: TWINS™ Magazine

Conjoined 8-month-old twins separated at Children's Hospital

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Surgeons have successfully completed operations to separate 8-month-old twin girls who were joined at the lower chest and abdomen, officials said.

Children's Hospital of Philadelphia said the seven-hour procedures to separate Allison and Amelia Tucker, of Adams, N.Y., were completed Wednesday afternoon.



Officials earlier said the twins, who shared their chest wall, diaphragm, pericardium and liver, were "excellent candidates" for separation. Lead surgeon Holly Hedrick said in a statement Wednesday night that the complex surgery "went very well and as expected."

The twins are recovering in the newborn/infant intensive care unit and will be monitored closely during their recovery, she said. "We expect that, with this complex surgery behind them, Allison and Amelia

will receive the care, therapy and support to allow them to live full, healthy and independent lives," Hedrick said.

The surgery was the 21st separation of conjoined twins performed at the hospital and involved a team of about 40 members, including physicians, nurses and other medical staff from general surgery, plastic and reconstructive surgery, cardiac surgery, anesthesiology, radiology and neonatology, the hospital said.

Conjoined twins occur once in every 50,000 to 60,000 births, and most are stillborn. About three-quarters of such twins are female and are joined at least partially in the chest, sharing organs. Chances of successful surgery and survival are greater if the twins have separate sets of organs, the hospital said.

Mother Shellie Tucker, from Adams, N.Y., has documented her life with her daughters on a blog through CaringBridge.org. She first learned her girls were conjoined 20 months into her pregnancy.

Tucker gave birth at CHOP, where the twins have since spent their entire lives. Before the surgery, Tucker wrote that "at this point, it's in the surgeon's hands."

Hurricane Sandy Disaster Assistance. . .

We know there are so many people and families that have suffered serious damage to their homes and communities in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. Our hearts go out to everyone dealing with the destruction and trying to figure out what to do next. . . Disaster assistance can be found by visiting: www.disasterassistance.gov/

"We have done all a parent can do," she added. "We just have to hold our breath and hope and pray." Allison and Amelia are recovering in the hospital's intensive care unit for newborns.

A year ago, conjoined 20-month-old twins from the Dominican Republic were separated at a Virginia hospital. Maria and Teresa Tapia were attached at the lower chest, and surgical teams successfully divided their liver, pancreas and other shared organ systems and reconstructed their abdominal walls.

A few days before that, 2-year-old twin sisters Angelica and Angelina Sabuco, from San Jose, Calif., who were joined at the chest and abdomen, were separated in procedures performed at a California hospital.



National Non-Profit Milk Bank Issues Emergency Call for Donations

This holiday season, nonprofit milk banks are issuing an urgent call for donations in an effort to avoid a shortage of milk for fragile newborns in neonatal intensive care units in the United States and Canada. Nonprofit milk banks serve vulnerable infants whose doctors have prescribed donated milk to help protect against devastating infections.

The current shortage means that there is already not enough milk to meet the needs of hospitalized infants in all 50 states. The Human Milk Bank Association of North America (HMBANA) has issued an emergency call for donations through www.hmbana.org. HMBANA is a national nonprofit organization with 13 established milk banks in the U.S. and Canada.

"Lactating moms who donate their extra milk are sharing a true gift: the ability to help another baby thrive," says Kim Updegrove, a certified nurse midwife and executive director of the Mother's Milk Bank in Austin.

HMBANA's nonprofit milk bank affiliates receive surplus milk and dispense it after the donated milk is pasteurized and tested. *Women who have donated milk, or whose babies have received donated milk, are available to share their stories in your region. A few examples:*

- Manna Manley, the mother of quintuplets who received donated milk during the months following their birth in Indiana;
- Paola Venturini Hubert, mother of "micropremie" twins Alexander and Claire, who received donated milk during their stay in the neonatal intensive care unit of a Colorado hospital;
- Donors who have banked their surplus milk are also available to share their perspectives on the experience of giving. See photos from the Facebook page of the Mother's Milk Bank of New England to get a feeling for the spirit of milk banking (http://www.facebook.com/MMBNE/photos_stream)

During the holiday season, the shortage of donated milk is expected to worsen further.

Women interested in donating milk can send a note to admin@hmbana.org or find a Mothers' Milk Bank on Facebook.

Save the Children to Assist Children and Families Affected by Hurricane Sandy...

Save the Children has deployed emergency response teams to coastal and northern New Jersey to assess the needs of children in areas devastated by Hurricane Sandy. New Jersey bore the brunt of the storm, which caused widespread destruction along the East Coast, displacing thousands from their homes and leaving millions without power.

"We as a nation have a moral obligation to protect the most vulnerable during disasters, our children. We have to do everything we can to minimize the negative and long-lasting effect these events can have on children and provide the support they need," said Mark Shriver, senior vice president of Save the Children's U.S. Programs.

"That's why Save the Children is deploying our emergency response teams to the hardest-hit areas of New Jersey to assess the needs of children and their families and ensure a quick recovery of essential services, such as child care."

As Sandy approached, the Save the Children distributed advice to families for keeping children safe during the hurricane. The aid agency has a history of responding in the areas most affected by the storm, and has led disaster preparedness and risk reduction programs throughout America in recent years, in order to minimize the devastating impact of storms like Hurricane Sandy on children. Save the Children focuses on addressing the needs of children before, during and after a disaster and has helped provide kid-friendly relief supplies and other essential support.

In 2009, Save the Children donated 100 Child-Friendly Space kits to New York City's Office of Emergency Management through our partnership with the agency. When Hurricane Irene struck two years later, these kits were used to create

child-friendly environments in 82 hurricane shelters housing 1,708 children.

"Hurricane Sandy impacted millions of lives, forcing many families in high-risk areas to flee from their homes and seek safety in shelters. Here at Save the Children, we know from experience that children are always the most vulnerable in any emergency situation," said Carolyn Miles, Save the Children's president and CEO. "Through our preparedness, response and recovery programs, we continue to put the unmet needs of children and their caregivers first."

To support Save the Children's response to immediate and ongoing needs following the storm, donate to the Hurricane Sandy Children in Emergencies Fund by visiting: www.savethechildren.org/sandy

TTTS World Awareness Day is December 7th, 2012

<http://www.worldtttsawarenessday.org/>

TTTS World Awareness Day is an international mobilization effort created by The Twin to Twin Transfusion Syndrome Foundation (www.tttsfoundation.org) 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



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.



Mother and Child® Twin Pendants

by Janel Russell



Sterling Silver
Pendant
\$55.99

browse the entire collection at: www.JanelRussell.com

there is one placenta or two. Women must learn the warning signs of TTTS, the 15 questions to ask at each ultrasound, and the available treatment options. World TTTS Awareness Day is about empowering parents and is filled with messages of Hope, Help and Encouragement. Your babies can make it and be healthy. Don't ever give up. Please, Get Educated, Get Ultrasounds, Ask Questions, Get Treatment and Get Involved! This day is also a remembrance day for all the babies who have had TTTS. Candles will be lit tonight across the world during the vigil and messages may also be left for your babies through lighting online candles.

***Read and learn more about TTTS inside this issue...*

ALMOST IDENTICAL Series by New York Times Bestselling Author Lin Oliver Now Available...



The *ALMOST IDENTICAL* series by New York Times bestselling author Lin Oliver follows twin sisters Sammie and Charlie as they try to maintain their friendship while finding their own independence at a new school. As the series switches between alternating points of view, Oliver captures the voice and emotions of two very different middle-school twin sisters in

a way that is exceptionally authentic and alluring to young readers. It's *Sweet Valley High* for middle schoolers!

The first two books in the series, #1 *ALMOST IDENTICAL* and #2 *TWO-FACED*

went on sale simultaneously earlier this fall. The third book, #3 *DOUBLE-CROSSED*, will publish next March. *Publishers Weekly* praised #1 *ALMOST IDENTICAL* as "an enjoyable and emotionally honest story of social pressures and learning to be comfortable in one's own skin."

Lin Oliver is a star among middle-grade writers. She is the bestselling author of several books for children and the executive director of the Society for Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. Lin was the recipient of the 2003 Dorothy C. Mc Kenzie Award for Distinguished Contribution to the Field of Children's Literature, and together with Henry Winkler, Lin was the 2010 recipient of the PEN USA Award of Merit, for their Hank Zipzer series, which has sold more than 2.9 million copies.

The *ALMOST IDENTICAL* series is published by Grosset & Dunlap, an imprint of Penguin Young Readers Group and books are geared for ages 8-12 and are available in both hardcover (\$15.99) and paperback (\$6.99).

Elmo's Super Heroes...are coming to a town near you!

Calling all super heroes! Super Grover needs your help – and its Elmo and the Fabulous Five to the rescue when this fantastic musical production zooms into a town near you. Join Elmo, Zoe, Abby Cadabby, Telly Monster and Zoe's pet rock Rocco for *Sesame Street Live* "Elmo's Super Heroes"

When Super Grover loses his superness, Sesame Street needs a hero! Never fear, Elmo and his team of super heroes are here. Teaching lessons of healthy habits through song and dance, Elmo, Abby Cadabby and your favorite Sesame Street friends will explore exercise, nutrition, sleep/energy and hygiene – all in a quest



to put the "super" back in Super Grover. It's Elmo's Super Heroes to the rescue!

Sesame Street Live "Elmo's Super Heroes" features an array of popular (and healthy!) songs, many of them renditions of tunes that parents will remember and kids will love: "Old MacDonald," "Splish Splash," "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" and "Sunny Days." Like television's Sesame Street, each **Sesame Street Live** production features timeless lessons for all ages.



Through the dazzle of this full-blown Broadway-quality show, the production will teach children lessons in healthy habits that they can use long after the show ends. Adults will appreciate the universal appeal of **Sesame Street Live**, the high-tech stagecraft and cleverly written scripts. Watch a video preview of the show and additional information online by visiting www.sesamestreetlive.com. Become a fan of **Sesame Street Live** on Facebook. (<https://www.facebook.com/sesamestreetlive>)

To find an upcoming show near you click on this link and enter your zip code: [http://sesamestreetlive.com/proximity?distance\[postal_code\]=enter+zip+code&distance\[country\]=us&distance\[search_distance\]=300&distance\[search_units\]=mile](http://sesamestreetlive.com/proximity?distance[postal_code]=enter+zip+code&distance[country]=us&distance[search_distance]=300&distance[search_units]=mile)

#1 choice of lactation consultants

my Brest friend

THE BEST FOR BREASTFEEDING



Maintains Proper Positioning

Secure wraparound design

Adjustable back support

Firm angled top ideal for positioning babies



Available Online at...

[amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

Walmart 
Save money. Live better.

BABIES R US

**buybuy
BABY.**

www.mybrestfriend.com



by Bonnie Z. Dowd

10 Lessons to Teach

This year I'm turning 40, yep, the big Four-O... My journey into middle-age is about to begin, and in preparing for this journey I've been reevaluating what's important to me. So at 39 I'm taking inventory of my life. Where do I want to go? Who do I want to be? And, how do I want to live my life?

Bonnie Z. Dowd lives in Hatfield, Massachusetts and was once an art teacher is still a fundraiser, always a mother and sometimes a writer. She has three children, including fraternal twin boys.

I've learned a lot over the last four decades and had some wonderful teachers along the way, including my parents, a college art professor, a handful of close friends, and my husband. But who was my best teacher? I can point to three. One just turned 7 and is in first grade. The other two aren't in school yet. They're only 2 1/2, yet they have taught me so much. They are my children: Shannon, Colin and Aaron.

Shannon, Colin and Aaron have given me far greater gifts than I could ever imagine. They have taught me 10 invaluable lessons about life and these lessons I thought were worth sharing with all of you....

Lesson #1

Nurture your sense of curiosity and wonderment. Rediscover the joy, excitement, and mystery of the world. How do we counteract ho-humness? Watch the innocence of a child: the baby comes into this world with a Cheshire grin on his face and a sparkle in his eyes. My son Aaron---everything he feels, sees, touches and smells is special and almost magical. Watch him discover a sparkling rock in the sand or one yellow dandelion in a field of fuzzy white ones. I marvel at this joy, and wonder when I and other adults lost it. This gift so often disappears with age.

As adults, our sense of wonder needs to be reawakened. Who better to teach us than a child? Children deserve parents, friends and family members in their lives who share their sense of curiosity and wonderment.

Lesson #2

Learn to see---again, Children teach you to view the world in a new way. Adults often have tunnel vision. We concentrate on getting through our "List of Things to Do Today" unconscious of the beauty surrounding us. We don't allow ourselves the pleasure of stopping and seeing the beauty of a clear day or a special smile. We need to see again for the first time like a child. Children see beauty in sleeping cats, marshmallows, copper pennies and spider webs, things we look at everyday, but do not see because we are so busy. By seeing the world around us, we can start living in it, not simply passing through it. So much in this world still remains so beautiful.

Lesson #3

Maintain a sense of humor. Children laugh at their own shadows, dogs and each other. Their laughter is contagious. We need to laugh the way we once did as children. We all experience disappointments. But we need to relax and see the humor in none-too-serious things like spilled juice, piles of washed but unfolded laundry, weeds in the flower garden. Get past the mess, and get on with the day. We need to laugh at ourselves to lead a richer life and enjoy the journey.

Lesson #4

Live in the moment. Be like a child every moment, every day of the year. Celebrate life, don't complain about it. Watch a child play in the park, run from swing to swing, from slide to water fountain and back again, chasing ducks and squirrels. Act on impulse some of the time. Keep trying until you can be...unpretentious!

Lesson #5

Be flexible and open to change. Watch children trying to build a fort from a cardboard box. If the box isn't sturdy, they'll find a table instead. And if the table is too small for three children to fit under, they'll build a fort of pillows from the family room sofa. Children are flexible. They make the best of change. Find new ways to solve

problems, even if it means changing "the way we have always done things."

When my twins were two, they had a series of upper respiratory infections that led to pneumonia. I learned that I never wanted Colin and Aaron to feel that sick again. So I set out to find a way to get them healthy and keep them healthy. Conventional medicine seemed to be treating the symptoms and not the problem. That's why I focused on homeopathy. We changed their diet and tried different herbs and vitamin supplements. Their health improved.

Today, one year later, they are the healthiest they've ever been. That's why we need to be open to change and alternative ways of solving problems.

Lesson #6

Learn to say "no". Anyone who has spent time with a two-year-old knows the all-too-familiar "no" word. "No, no nap!" "No, no peas!" "No, no diaper!" "No, no, no!" My twin boys say "no" to almost everything I ask of them, and after a while it gets pretty humorous. Think how much easier our lives would be if we said "no" a little more often. Saying "no" is not a selfish act. No is a gentle, loving word.

Lesson #7

Be humble. Children teach the true meaning of humility. No one is perfect, not even parents. My parenting report-card contains some A's, some B's and an "X" in the box marked "needs improvement." That's okay with me. Striving for perfection would totally stress me out, and those are two life skills I don't want to teach my children: being perfect and being totally stressed out.

Lesson #8

Relax and play more. Children often see adults as unhappy giants. We grow up, grow old, and get dull. Age and height become a handicap for having fun. Imitate a child and have an enjoyable experience. Run. Skip. Twirl around until you're dizzy and tumble to the ground. Reach

Continued on page 29

Designed GREEN for a new generation of eco-minded mothers and their babies

Double Blessings™

proudly announces the arrival of

NEW!

San Diego Bebé Twin™

Eco-Nursing Pillow™

Support, Comfort, Discretion...
for mom and twins

The next generation of "EZ-2-Nurse Twins"



San Diego Bebe

Nursing one baby? Check out

www.sandiegobebe.com

for our complete line of nursing pillows.

DoubleBlessings.com • 1(800)584-TWIN



Hypo-allergenic • Non-toxic • Non-flammable • Recyclable
Odor-free • Glue-free • Foam-free • Lead-free • Phthalate-free
The Original Twin Nursing Pillow since 1995...just got better!



Prematurity

by Leslie Montgomery

Is it Preventable?

It is the single most important problem with multiple births.

Leslie Montgomery, R.N., B.S.N. of Englewood, Colorado, specializes in educating expectant parents of multiples. She is a childbirth educator and the mother of boy/girl twins

It occurs 10 times more often than with singleton births.

It needless to say, is prematurity. About half of all twins and three-quarters of triplets are born before the 37th week of pregnancy.

Each week of pregnancy, of course, improves a fetus's chance of survival outside the womb. Babies born prematurely are 120 times more likely to die than those carried to full term, says Roberto Romero, head of the Perinatology Research Branch of the National Institute of

Child Health and Human Development. (Perinatal refers to the period after the 28th week of pregnancy through 28 days following the birth.)

FLUIDS, FOOD ARE KEYS

While we have become much better at saving the lives of premature babies, albeit at an increasing financial, emotional, and physical price, we still do not yet have a handle on readily forestalling their birth.

Nevertheless, some obstetricians have succeeded in prolonging pregnancies to term, even against great odds. They achieve it not because they perform miracles, but because they empower and educate their patients.

In many cases, preterm labor is preventable in pregnancies with multiples. But the patient must be in time with her body, must know what good nutrition is, must be able to identify signs and symptoms that contractions are occurring, and know what to do about them.

Being pregnant with multiples automatically classifies you as being high risk. As a patient you must learn to detect any threatening changes. Most importantly, you need to trust your intuition. If you can detect preterm labor in its early phases—before the cervix has undergone

significant changes and before the membranes have ruptured—many times it can be stopped with rest and increased fluid intake. An appropriate analogy would be a runner who drinks frequently to prevent muscle cramps. Hydration must be adequate in a multiples pregnancy to prevent falling blood volume, and thus the onset of premature labor contractions.

The term “preterm labor” is misleading. When we think of labor we think of pain and discomfort. Preterm labor is more subtle than that, and its contractions are often painless. In a multiples pregnancy especially, the taut or over distended uterine muscle makes it harder to pick up or feel contractions. Consequently, preterm labor is difficult to diagnose. Even those patients who have given birth before and are familiar with the labor process can miss it because, with a multiples pregnancy, preterm labor typically occurs earlier and doesn't feel like labor. It is important that you know and be able to recognize the seven warning signs and symptoms of preterm labor. (See side-bar on the Warning Signs and Symptoms of Preterm Labor.)

WHAT TO DO

Around 20 weeks' gestation you should lie on your side, place your hands on your abdomen (one hand on either side of your navel or belly button), and feel for any tightening of the uterus for one hour. Do this twice daily, the morning and evening. If one side of your abdomen is hard and the other is still indentable, then it is one of the babies you are feeling, not a contraction. Both sides of the uterus will be hard if there is a contraction, even if it lasts for only 20 seconds. It is normal to have a contraction upon rising from a sitting or prone position to a standing position, and if you let your bladder get to full. This type of contraction should, however, go away.

If you are having more than four contractions in an hour:

- Get two 10-12 oz. glasses of water or juice.
- Drink them as quickly as you can. Using a straw will help get the water or juice down faster.
- Lie down on your side to increase the blood flow to the uterus. It usually takes 20 to 30 minutes for the water to be absorbed and reach the circulatory system to become effective.

If after waiting for one hour the contractions have still not slowed down, drink one more 10-12 oz. glass of water and fill your bathtub with warm water. Soak for as long as you feel comfortable. The warm water will help relax you while still hydrating the uterus.



CERVIX BECOMES THIN

Call your physician if the contractions have not slowed down by this time. You will probably be sent to the hospital for additional monitoring and possibly administered tocolytic drugs to help stop the contractions.

It is unrealistic to think that a woman pregnant with multiples will not experience any contractions during her pregnancy. The difference between Braxton-Hicks contractions, which are normal contractions that appear from time to time, and real preterm labor contractions is not in the type of contraction. They are both the same.

The difference instead is in the frequency, or consistency of the contractions. If they are occurring on an hourly basis consistently, these types of contractions can thin and dilate the cervix.

Many authors suggest that there is a strong link between preterm labor and inadequate weight gain during pregnancy. One study found an increased risk of spontaneous preterm birth in women with a low rate of weight gain (less than 0.6 to 1.15 lbs. per week.)

WEIGHT GAIN IS NECESSARY

In twin gestations, higher maternal weight gain seems to lead to higher birth weights and longer length of gestation. Another study demonstrated that, regardless of how much the mother weighed before pregnancy, women who gained 40 to 45 pounds had a lower incidence of low birth weight and prematurity in twin gestations.

We can, it seems, gain some control over preterm labor contractions simply by strengthening the "terrain," both physically and

mentally. In other words, eat an appropriate diet full of vitamins, minerals, protein and calories. Your physician may have you take baby aspirin daily. In several studies it has helped reduce the incidence of preterm deliveries due to preeclampsia or fetal growth retardation.

Continued on page 15

WARNING SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF PRETERM LABOR

- Dull low backache
- Menstrual-like cramps
- Pelvic pressure (feels like the babies are going to fall out when you stand up!)
- Abdominal cramping with or without diarrhea
- Increase or change in vaginal discharge
- Possible contractions
- "Feeling bad or something's not quite right"



Are Your Twins Identical?

Twin
Zygosity Test:
\$150 PLUS
\$10 Shipping and handling

AFFILIATED GENETICS

HAS BEEN INFORMING FAMILIES SINCE 1994

- Accredited by the AABB for DNA based relationship testing (one of less than 50 labs worldwide)
- Helpful personal service
- Results within seven business days
- All results reviewed and reported by Dr. Kenneth Ward, who is board certified in four sub-specialties: OB/GYN, Maternal Fetal Medicine, Medical Genetics, and Molecular Genetics, and has delivered hundreds of multiple pregnancies



Contact us toll free at: 1-800-362-5559

www.affiliatedgenetics.com



Cara Krenn lives in San Diego with her husband Jim and fraternal twin girls Caroline and Kelly. A freelance writer, editor and stay-at-home mom, she blogs about her adventures at www.twinthusiasm.com.

10 Things Every Parent of Twins Should Know During Babies' First Months



by Cara Krenn

When you're pregnant with twins or higher order multiples, you know that the first few months with your babies will be challenging. However, it can still come as a shock just how intense the newborn phase really can be! Here's what I wish someone had told me when my twins were born.

1 You will sleep again. With two small babies with very big demands, you may feel like you will never sleep again. The first few months with twins are exhausting, no doubt. But you will not always be this tired. Your babies will eventually sleep for longer and longer stretches as they grow and mature and the first months will seem far away soon enough.

2 Say "yes" to offers of help. Lots of people will likely offer to help you during the first few weeks your twins are

at home. Remember to say "yes" to help in whatever form it comes. Draft a list of specific things you need – prepared meals, laundry assistance, help with an older child, grocery shopping, tidying the house – so when family or friends ask what needs to be done you can readily assign specific tasks. Perhaps your neighbor can make dinner one night while a family member takes your babies for a walk so you can nap. You can always thank your friends and family with visits from your twins in the months to come.

3 Find your routine and stick with it. While things may seem a little crazy the first few weeks your babies are home, you'll eventually fall into a feed, play, sleep cycle. It may take a while to "get into the groove" but a schedule for your babies

may help save your sanity. Figure out what works best for your family and stick with it.

4 Address any breastfeeding issues immediately. If you're planning on breastfeeding your twins and encounter any trouble (blocked milk ducts, latching problems, positioning issues, etc.) get help right away. Ask your hospital or local parents of twins club if they offer a lactation support group. A lactation specialist can help identify and resolve early issues that may be more challenging with multiples.

5 Your crying babies are ok. Listening to a crying baby is stressful, but the chorus of two crying babies can be really stressful – especially if you're a first-time parent! Remember that crying is normal, especially during the first few months. You are only one person with two hands and it's impossible to immediately meet the needs of two babies. When crying seems overwhelming, take a deep breath and tell your twins "I'm going to change your diaper now and then it's your turn to be picked up." Remind yourself that sharing your attention will eventually make your children more patient. Of course, call your pediatrician if you're truly concerned about your babies' crying.

6 Don't compare yourself to parents of singletons. It may be frustrating to hear about parents of one baby happily going on shopping excursions, day trips, or other fun adventures that seem impossible when you're the parent of two newborns. While you may be tempted to say to yourself "I could do those things if I only

had one..." remember that your challenges may be different than singleton parents and cut yourself a break.

7 Get out and DO stuff! Don't be afraid to get out of the house and take your babies places. Whether it's a long drive to see family, a trip to the store or a picnic at the park, it will do wonders for your psyche to be "out in the world." Try to plan at least one fun outing a week with your babies.

8 Take parenting advice or leave it. Everyone loves to give new parents advice. Remember that some parenting "mantras" may not apply to twins. For example, the idea that you should "never wake a sleeping baby" may not be practical for your day-to-day routine. Work with your pediatrician to handle any issues you may face and don't feel pressured to take the well-intentioned advice of family or friends.

9 You need a break every once in a while. Really. You've got a big job taking care of two little ones, but don't forget that you need to take care of yourself too. Even if it's just a quick trip to the coffee shop or a solo run, try to arrange for time for yourself to recharge your mental batteries.

10 Welcome to the club! Remember that you are special. For the rest of your life, you'll be part of the parents of multiples "club." Have fun with those precious babies of yours – they'll be grown before you know it. ♥

Life is better when
twins dine together!



Cut Feeding Time and Hassle in Half!

Table for Two is a comfy and secure twin feeder that lets you feed two babies at the same time without stress, strain or mess! Cut your work in half and feed your twins in half the time! Table for Two is a must-have item for parents of twins!



www.buytablefortwo.com





TODDLERS

Comforting Solutions to Pacifier Problems

by Janet Gonzalez-Mena

Janet Gonzalez-Mena

is the mother of five children and was a former teacher of early childhood education at Napa Valley College in Napa, California. She is also co-author of the book *Infants, Toddlers and Caregivers*.

When I was a new mother, my pediatrician told me that pacifiers were important because of babies' sucking needs. "Often their tummies get full before they satisfy those sucking needs," he said. He was adamant about getting babies in his care started on the pacifier, but he never told

me about the problem waiting down the road.

Two years later, I wasn't a new mother anymore, and I was sick and tired of the pacifier. My son Bruce was hooked on the thing. Looking back, I see that the way I used the pacifier was the problem, not the pacifier itself. Although it started as a means of giving him more sucking time, I eventually over-used the device. I was frantic to comfort him whenever he cried. I couldn't stand the thought of his experiencing a moment of discomfort, so I "fixed" his every problem.

Once his mouth was full of latex, he forgot what was bothering him. It worked, but if I had it to do over again, I'd do it differently. Perhaps if I had tried more often to figure

out what he really needed instead of automatically "pacifying" him, he wouldn't have become such a sucking addict by the age of two.

I tried several times during those two years to slowly wean him off his pacifier, but each episode just led to power struggles. Then it was a whole row of sleepless nights, which finally brought the situation to a head. Bruce would wake up every time the pacifier dropped out of his mouth, and call for me. I reached the end of my patience. That pacifier had to go!

WORDS OF WISDOM

I asked friends for advice. "Make a ceremony of cutting it up and putting it in the garbage," was one suggestion.

"Just get rid of it—and be assured that your decision is for the best," said another



advice-giver. "He doesn't really need it, you know," she added.

She was wrong; he did need that pacifier. He'd never in his life gone to sleep without it. How would he manage? I worried myself into a frenzy.

In spite of my anxiety, I was determined to get rid of the pacifier. I woke up the morning of the designated day with a feeling of dread. At breakfast, I talked to Bruce about my decision. I explained that he didn't need the pacifier anymore and that it wasn't good for him to keep sucking on it. I skipped the proposed cutting-up ceremony, because I wasn't so sure about that approach.

After breakfast I sneaked into his room, recovered the pacifier from his bed, then hid it in the top of the cupboard. The morning went smoothly and he never mentioned the pacifier. A little friend came over to play and kept him busy enough to keep his mind off his sucking habit.

"Fine," I said to myself. "But wait till naptime." After lunch, Bruce played while I cleared the table. I was just getting ready to put him down for his nap when he tripped and banged his knee. I was in the midst of comforting him when his baby brother cried out from the other room, so I left Bruce briefly. When I returned, he was sound asleep on the floor where he had fallen. I picked him up gently and put him to bed. He didn't waken. "Well," I thought, "we got through naptime."

We got through the afternoon fine, too. No mention of the pacifier. Then came the dreaded bedtime... We had our special snuggle time and a story; I was ready to turn out the light when he started to whimper. I held him and stroked his head. "Mommy..." he said looking up with tear-filled eyes. "Yes, Bruce?" I said, wondering if I could hold to my resolve in the face of his obvious agony.

"Mommy?" he took a big breath, then continued, "Can I have a vitamin?" "Sure Bruce," I said, grinning. I rushed from the room to fill his request.

He took the vitamin gratefully, laid his head down on his pillow, chewed, swallowed, closed his eyes and went to sleep. Never again did he ask for anything to put in his mouth at bedtime. It was if he had never even heard of a pacifier.

None of my other children ever got too dependent on the pacifier. Two refused it from day one, and two sucked for a few months and spit it out for good, so I never had to unhook another toddler again.

IT'S NOT ALWAYS A BIG DEAL

I discovered years later that my experience wasn't unusual. It seems that many toddlers need the pacifier far less than their parents believe. I was surprised at the number of stories that were similar to mine. The funniest one came from a mother whose preschooler willingly sold his pacifier to his uncle for two dollars. At bedtime he shrieked with anger when he discovered that the sale was final. He felt he had been deceived and was so upset that his mother took him to the store the next day so he could buy a new one with his two dollars. Strangely enough, he never sucked on the new one; he just put it in his nightstand and kept it there.

It's hard to give advice on how to break the pacifier habit, because each child is different. In Bruce's case, I could have ended up with a huge power struggle on my hands; instead, I became my son's ally in helping him take a step he needed to take.

But there are some general rules regarding the use of pacifiers that parents might want to keep in mind. First, don't run frantically for it at every peep but try instead to determine what the real needs are; instead of the pacifier, does your child *really* need a hug, or food, or a drink, for example? Secondly, realize that crying is a normal way of expressing feelings. You want your children to express their feelings, not just to be "pacified."

Moreover, don't let sucking become a moral issue instead of merely a need and comfort device. I once asked my mother if I ever sucked my thumb, and her eyes widened in horror. "Oh no, Janet," she said. "You were a good baby!" I was astonished that she had connected my thumb to morals.

The use of pacifiers, like thumb-sucking, isn't a moral issue at all. If there is a "good" or "bad" to it, it's as a habit—which pacifiers become if used after the need for additional sucking wants, but the desire for comfort and security continues. Help your child break the pacifier habit when you think he's using it more to satisfy the latter need than the former.

In the meantime, teach him alternate means of achieving comfort and security, so that when the time comes, giving up the pacifier won't be such a sacrifice after all. ♥



Continued from page 11

PREGNANCY

YOU CAN REDUCE ODDS

Doctors may also screen for bacterial vaginosis, which is a condition where bacteria normally present in the vagina are replaced by more virulent species during pregnancy. A normal course of antibiotics treats it.

By working with your OB/GYN, in short, you can drastically reduce the odds of a preterm birth. Remember, prevention is always better than treatment after the fact. Make your family a vital part of your pregnancy, and soliciting their help around the house so you can rest. Your pregnancy with multiples can and should be an exciting and thrilling part of your life. After all, you're baby-building. ♥

NUTRITION-RELATED FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH PREMATURITY

- Anthropometric Factors (body measurements)
- Low eight before conception
- Low body fat
- Low total gestational weight gain
- Low rate of gestational weight gain
- Inadequate late weight gain (after 24 weeks)
- Dietary
- Fasting/starvation
- Chronic malnutrition/under nutrition
- Inadequate vitamin A
- Inadequate folate
- Inadequate iron
- Inadequate magnesium
- Inadequate calcium
- Inadequate zinc
- Inadequate essential fatty acids (primarily comes from eating fish)
- Inadequate essential amino acids (protein)
- Lifestyle
- Smoking
- Alcohol use



WHICH WOULD YOUR CHILDREN CHOOSE?

by Patricia Edmister

As the holidays approach, many parents of multiples begin to agonize over gift giving options.

- Do I have to give each child the same thing?
- Do I have to spend the same amount of money on each child?
- Does each child need to receive the same number of gifts?
- Do I give them things they want or things they need? What if only one of my children needs certain things---will the other one(s) feel unfairly treated?

What should I tell relatives and friends to do?

Actually, these questions aren't very different from the same ones asked by parents who have children of differing ages. Although most parents try to be as fair as possible, in the process they sometimes lose sight of what gift-giving is all about—showing other people that they are cared about by demonstrating sensitivity to their wants and needs.

The first step, then, in choosing gifts for children is to determine, with input from them, what they want and need. Parents might start by trying to see each of their children's desires from

their respective perspectives. Why does each of my children want a particular item? Is it because a friend or co-twin has or wants one? Or has the desire been created through media hype, something that happens a lot around holiday time?

Then parents are advised to evaluate the desired item from their own perspectives, starting by looking at its health and safety factors and moving on to its appropriateness for their child's developmental level. To determine appropriateness, the parent should ask:

Is my child ready (in terms of her cognitive and motor abilities) to use this gift appropriately?

Is this item something that will stimulate her creativity and imagination, or does it serve only one function, which will bore her after a short period of time?

Is it worth the asking price? Many toys featured in the media or in connection with a holiday movie promotion are greatly overpriced, may be of poor quality and are one function-only items.

THE "WISH LIST" SECRET

One way to handle this problem of children constantly barraging parents as the holidays near with "I want this," and "I want that" is to develop wish lists, one for each child, which parents can start either at holiday time or maintain throughout the year.

To begin this special list, parents need to first explain the concept to their children, saying that it is a list of the various items they've mentioned throughout the time period prior to the holiday (or birthday, for that matter) that they really want you, relatives, friends and Santa (if appropriate) to think about when it comes time to give gifts. Parents should emphasize that putting an item on a wish list doesn't ensure that the child will receive it, but that it will be considered by others.

Then, when a child says, "I want..." in a store, while watching television or while looking through catalogs or magazines, ask him whether he wants that to go on the wish list. If so, add it to the list. Shortly before the actual holiday, parents need to sit down with each of their children and his list and go over it, scratching off whatever the child no longer wants. Everyone will be surprised by the number of items requested early in the year that don't make the final cut at the end of the year.

By keeping an individual list for each child, parents are better able to purchase individual gifts for each child. And children are better able to understand that they don't necessarily

Patricia Edmister, Ph.D. resides in Sherman Oaks, California is the mother of fraternal twins and was the director of developmental psychology and children's study at the California Family Study Center.



want the same things, nor are they likely to get the same things. This way, parents are demonstrating respect for their children's individual preferences and desires.

MONEY MATTERS

Children at the preschool age don't have a good sense of monetary values, so it isn't critical that parents spend the same amount on each child. If they compare gifts, it is much more likely to be in terms of the number of gifts received or the size of the gifts. These concepts are much more within their developmental level.

Thus, if co-twins are into such comparisons, and one child wants a lot of small things, like several Barbie outfits, and the other wants a particular Lego set, it might be wise to package the Barbie outfits into a big box, to be counted as one gift.

Again, parents' goal is to try to give each child what he or she wants, while trying to keep comparisons to a minimum.

If they observe Christmas in their household and hang stockings, parents may want to wrap small items as stocking stuffers, ensuring that each child has lots of presents to unwrap.

FAMILY RITUALS

Some families have established family practices around gift-giving that make it more fun. For example, a family might give each child at least one gift to fit each of several standard categories, such as: Something to Read; Something to Wear; Something They Need; Something to Listen To; and Something to Eat. That way, over the year, it becomes a ritual to try to guess what each person will receive by category, and at the same time, makes giving them something they need more pleasurable.

It is important to begin differentiating gift-giving early so that children do not develop unreasonable expectations as they get older. If two children have the same item on their wish list as a priority, it's okay to give it to each of them, as long as they realize why—that they didn't get the same thing just because they are twins.

There may be times as they get older when they want an expensive gift, such as an MP3 player or TV that they will have to share. Parents will make their learning to share more difficult if they've always given

each his own. Parents may even want to start a family practice of giving twins one gift a year to be shared between them, provided a common item can be found on both their wish lists.

When it comes to helping family and friends with their gift-giving; pass on ideas from the wish lists. Rather than saying, "Oh, they'll be happy with anything you want to give." Too often, the latter sets everyone up for unhappiness—the children, who receive gifts they don't want, you, if the gift is not appropriate for the children developmentally or in terms of safety, and the relative, who does not feel appreciated when the children "turn up their noses" at it.

It's much better for parents to take a pro-active role by making concrete suggestions for successful gift-giving. And, if you have specific toy-buying guidelines you'd like relatives to respect, now is the time to mention them—not after the buyer is embarrassed by the children's response to their gifts or when tears and tantrums follow the children's being unable to play with the toys. ♥

WATCHWORDS TO BUY BY!

- Does the toy you are purchasing reflect your values—for example, is it educational, non-violent and cooperative in nature?
- Is this toy appropriate to your child's cognitive and motor skills?
- Will it stimulate your child's imagination and creativity, or is it a single-use toy?
- Does the toy promote sex-role stereotyping and is that a message you want to convey?
- Are you buying the toy based on your child's wishes and/or needs?
- Is the toy safe?
- Is the toy a good value and worth what it costs?
- Is your child going to maintain interest in this toy or might he be asking for it in response to media hype?
- Are you buying something for your children to share?
- What basis will the children be using for comparing gifts, and are you being responsive to that?



Identical or Fraternal?

You think they're fraternal, your friends say identical. We'll give you the answer.

TWIN ZYGOSITY TEST

- Easy, at-home testing.
- 99% + Accuracy.
- Results in 7-10 business days.
- \$150 plus \$10 S/H includes testing for both twins.

PROGEN
ProactiveGenetics

Easy Ordering For Busy Moms

Call 1-866-894-6362

Mon-Fri 9AM-5PM EST

OR

ORDER ONLINE

www.proactivegenetics.com



Holiday Gifts for Everyone

We have researched all the latest and greatest toys for the holiday season and have our top picks for 2012 in this year's Annual Holiday Gift Guide... We hope you check out these great gifts for everyone on your list!

Best Infant Gifts...

★ Manhattan Toy Winkel (Boxed)

Stunning colors give this perennial favorite a lively look. Babies will be engaged and amused by the responsive rattle, and caregivers can safely refrigerate this pliable plastic toy to produce a soothing teether. Size: 5" By Manhattan Baby.



★ Tiny Love Gymini - Sunny Days

Tiny Love Gymini - Sunny Days is an innovative way to add fun and entertainment to babies' play time. This activity-filled gym comes with a bright, musical sun and adorable toys that are suspended from flexible arches. The gym includes three melodies and plenty creative activities that enhance baby's sensory development. Comes with different colors, textures and designs for sensory growth.



★ aden + anais Swaddling Blankets



Parents tell us they love to have these breathable, generously-sized blankets on hand for a host of spur-of-the-moment uses. They're great for burping, covering changing tables on the go and much more. Made of natural cotton muslin, they're soft, pretty, and indispensable...



★ Trumpette Rosie's Baby Socks Box Set

These colorful and fun socks come in a variety of colors: fuchsia, lavender, green, yellow, white, red, 80% cotton / 17% nylon / 3% spandex; Rubber grip create a no-skid sock for ages 0-12 mos. Machine Wash.

★ WarmZe bottle warmer system

Now, there is new technology that allows you to heat a bottle absolutely anywhere without needing electricity, hot water or a car outlet charger. The WarmZe bottle warmer system uses air-activated warming wraps to evenly heat your baby's bottle. Simply stick a warming wrap to your WarmZe Bottle-Soc, slide it on your bottle and in 30 minutes you will have a perfectly tepid bottle - the best part, you never have to worry about the bottle boiling or overheating and burning your baby. The WarmZe Starter-Kit, including the BottleSoc and 2 biodegradable warmer refills, retails for \$15.99. The Starter-Kit is available in a small size that fits most reusable 4-6 ounce bottles, and a large size that fits most reusable 8-11 ounce bottles. Additional warmer packs can be purchased in sets of two for \$9.99 per set. WarmZe is sold at BabieRUs.com and ToysRUs.com.



on Your List *Best Toddler Gifts...*

★ Plan Toys Fruit and Veggies

There are so many lessons to teach with this cute play set. The included toy knife allows children to practice "cutting" the food just like grownups. And the fruit sticks right back together with Velcro, so they can start all over again. Plan Toys are sustainably made with reclaimed rubberwood and completely non-toxic.



★ Hape Gourmet Kitchen

Inspire make-believe masterpieces with this child-sized, wooden play kitchen from Hape. We love the attention to detail: little chefs can peek through the window to check on dinner, while well-sized orange knobs turn the burners "on" or "off." And cleanup time is a snap: use the hutch and cupboard to store plates, pots and pans. Great for toddler twins since they can play with this Gourmet kitchen together!

★ Leap Frog Learn & Groove Musical Table

This engaging, entertaining toy offers myriad opportunities to spin, slide, push, pull, open, and close. In Learning Mode, babies and toddlers can explore letters, numbers, colors and opposites—in English or Spanish. Flip the page to Music mode for a preschool party: move and groove to nursery rhymes, real instrument sounds and upbeat dance tunes.



★ Plan Toys Pull-Along Zebra

When pulled, the zebra will nod as its rear springs up and down. The interesting character of the Zebra will surely help to motivate children to walk and move around. Parents can use the Pull-Along Zebra as a leading character in telling wonderful stories to their children such as the character and running like movement which will also help develop language, vocabulary and also help develop good relation in the family. Parents can teach about color and direction such as left, right, backward and forward.



★ Melissa and Doug Nesting and Stacking Blocks

Vibrant Melissa and Doug Nesting and Stacking Blocks provide bright pictures to introduce children to the alphabet. Vertically arranged, these blocks form a 3' structure. The four faces of the blocks are decorated with letters and images of familiar objects. Nesting and stacking these blocks can improve kids' hand-to-eye coordination and keep them engaged.



★ La Newborn Layette Gift Set

Obviously, no one would ever confuse a real baby with a baby doll. But if the goal is to get as close as possible, then according to the judges at The National Parenting Center, JC Toys has gotten extremely close. From the look to the feel and even to that newborn smell, the infant doll that comes with "La Newborn Layette" not only has the mommy seal of approval but the fall 2012 Seal of Approval as well.





My Very Merry Christmas Board Book by I See Me Personalized Books

Adorable forest animals prepare for a very merry Christmas for your child! This keepsake personalized book has a hard cover and sturdy board pages.



Best Pre-School Gifts...

LEGO Duplo My First Zoo

With LEGO Duplo My First Zoo, it's another fun day at the zoo! Help feed and care for the baby elephant, tiger, polar bear and giraffe with safe and sturdy bricks for little hands and big imaginations.

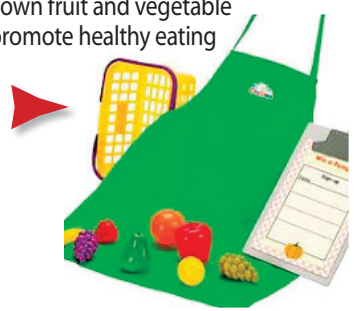


Green Toys Build-a-Bouquet Floral Arrangement Playset

Inspire design and creativity with your twins! Great play value for tiny hands and fingers, made from 100% recycled plastic milk jugs, saving energy and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, No BPA, Phthalates, PVC or external coatings.

The Citysteps™ Growing Things Dramatic Play Kit

This fun dramatic play kit features a variety of sturdy, realistic props to foster imaginative play! Kit includes everything your child needs to set up and run their own fruit and vegetable stand. A great way to promote healthy eating habits!



Creativity for Kids - Create Your Own 3 Bitty Books

Create your own tiny tales with 3 blank books, markers and sticker accents. 12 page books measure 4" x 5". You can add photographs, original works of art and your own captions. A bonus book holder is included!

Best School-Age Gifts...



Wearables

This is the collection of creative, constructible toys; kids can make a plane and then step inside it, wear it, to become a pilot! Wearables™ by Kid Constructions™ feature multiple die-cut corrugated pieces that children use to create, construct and wear their own creations. Buckled up in the Bulldozer with its front-loading plow, a child becomes a construction vehicle operator. Strapped into the Princess Carriage with its treasure chest and pony, a child transforms into a dazzling princess. With each Wearable children can take on a different imaginary role. Once they're put together, kids can decorate each piece using crayons, markers and stickers. When the toy is ready, kids can put the toy on using the shoulder straps and pretend to ride in an airplane or a carriage.

★ Exploracise® Addition Football

Help your kids learn to add through active play. Turn the first introduction to math calculation into fun. The new game is more fun than flash cards for learning important math facts through interactive games. Kids have a ball learning math with this product. Take along this soft stuffed ball to review addition outdoors, indoors, and even in the car. It is a colorful picture dictionary on an oversized ball making it easier to catch and throw. The soft stuffed ball makes throwing and catching easier. It develops coordination, social skills, and confidence. The game is easy to learn.



★ Do Art Travel Easel

This portable art studio is great for young artists to travel with—doing art in the car, on the plane, and at the final destination. The set includes

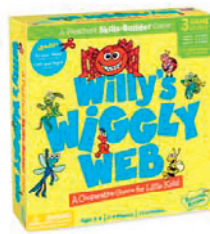
a variety of art materials for kids to draw and experiment with. There are oil pastels, markers, colored pencils and sharpener, and a drawing pad, plus chalk, a sponge, and white board marker. The easel has multi-functional surfaces. One side is a chalkboard, and the other is a white board with clips to become a drawing surface using paper. The set is designed with storage in mind, as all materials fit neatly inside when not in use, and the sturdy handle makes it easy to carry.



Best Board Games & Puzzles....

★ Willy's Wiggly Web

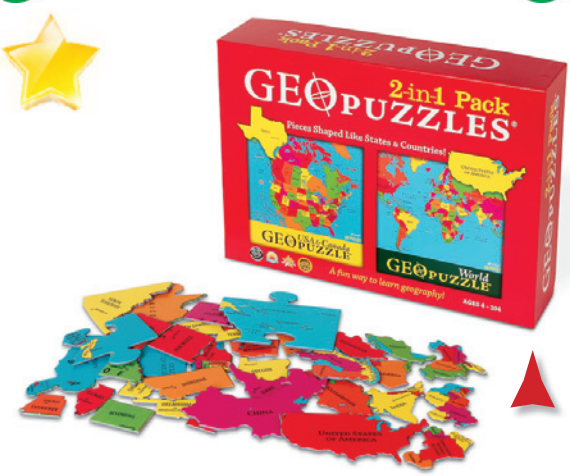
This cooperative game has many subtle values. On the surface it challenges players to free ten little bugs from a big spider web in which they have been trapped. In the process, children learn to play together, count numbers, follow directions, differentiate between left and right, and obey rules. But what they liked best of all was learning to use scissors, as they snipped away, taking turns to release the bugs from the spider web. The game is destined to last long, because it can be played in three ascending levels of difficulty, and comes with 50 stretchable paper webs. Ages 3 to 6!



★ Reverse Charades

Reverse Charades is a twist on the classic game. Instead of one person acting out a word or phrase, the team performs for one member to guess. The result is nothing short of hilarious. This game is pure chaos and laughter- all you need for a great bonding time with family and friends! New expansion packs from the family favorite, Reverse Charades make great stocking stuffers! With three different editions (Girls' Night In, Sports & Holiday) there is something for everyone! Girls' Night In Pack features words like makeover, belly dancing & blind date. Sports Pack will make you break out your synchronized swim, kickboxing & grand slam. The Holiday Edition is nothing but festive with mistletoe, snowball fight & three wise men!





Tantrix™ Discovery Game Pack - single

Stuffed to the brim with solitaire puzzles and challenging strategy games, this handy game pack is the perfect rainy day activity for the entire family. With over 25 puzzle and game combinations in the instruction booklet, players are kept busy creating closed loops of color using the color-coded Tantrix™ tiles, or playing interactive strategy games. Includes: 56 tiles, 1 nylon travel bag, instruction booklet.



Kwizniac

Kwizniac puts a twist on trivia so that finally we can all feel smart. You get clues to guess the person, place or thing and the fewer clues you need, the more points you get. This game is easy to take on the go and play anywhere, any time.



GeoPuzzles

Geography and fun? Those words are not often heard together...until now! GeoToys has found a way to take learning the states and countries easy and fun. The thing that really sets these puzzles apart is the pieces because they are shaped like each state or country so kids will know what goes where and what the countries and states look like. It is learning without even knowing! Ages 4 and up!



Brainstring Advanced

By Recent Toys this is perfect for hours of unplugged entertainment during the cold winter months! Trying to figure out this challenging brain teaser will stretch your puzzle-solving skills to the next level. Touted as the "Rubik's cube of the next generation," the Brainstring Advanced makes a fabulous gift for those ages 8 and up!

Exact Change

The best game on the market that teaches children to count money! Exact Change® combines an excellent teaching lesson with fun, fast paced action that the entire family will enjoy. The goal is to play all of your cards first. You can play a card by matching the currency value (play a penny on a penny), by matching the color of the last card played, or by making EXACT CHANGE. Making exact change allows you to discard multiple cards that add up to the value of the last card played. If the last card played shows a quarter, you can make exact change by playing two dimes and a nickel... allowing you to discard three cards in one play! Ages: 5 & up!





Best Stocking Stuffers...

They are usually the last things we buy- gum, socks, candy. This year, stuff your kids' stockings with some affordable gifts they will love!



Wubbanub

The perfect stocking stuffer for your babies very first Christmas... The pacifier is made of medical grade silicone, is BPA, PVC and Phthalate Free and is attached to an adorable and cuddly plush. This provides comfort to the touch and it also makes it so much easier for the baby's little hands to grasp and manipulate the pacifier all by them self! Wubbanub is available at a large variety of on-line and off-line retail locations including Amazon, Nordstrom, Babies R Us and Hallmark Stores.



Plan Toys Baby Car

We love this toy because it hides a secret. Pushing the car from behind makes it roll—but pushing down on the car makes it roll faster. Watching baby discover how the car works is almost as much fun as playing with the toy! The Baby Car is flexible, so it reacts easily to baby's touch. It's made from organic rubberwood and colored using vibrant, non-toxic water-based dyes.



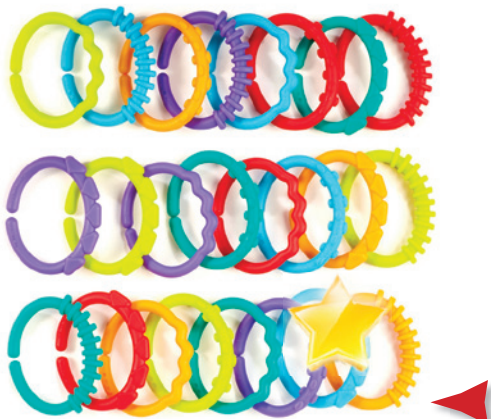
Tiny Love Tiny Smarts Jittering Activity Toy

Easy to grasp toy that encourages eye-hand coordination, motor skills and cause & effect learning. For Ages: Birth & up.



Rhino Toys 4" Oball Jellies

It Sparkles! A ball full of finger holes that is incredibly easy to catch, captivating to hold, and safe to throw. Shiny, Smooth, Flexible, Durable and virtually Indestructible. Oball is the ideal ball in every situation. Now all the great Oball features in a colorful sparkly ball. When we say Oball is "The Everybody Ball," we really mean it!



Bright Starts Lots of Links

Bright Starts Lots of Links is a set of 24 on-the-go links for maximum fun. Its engaging features keep babies interested for a long time. It helps develop baby's sense of touch and inspires laughter and smiles. The attractive colors promote development of baby's visual senses. Bright Starts Lots of Links comes with a reusable storage bag that helps you carry this toy anywhere. Age: Newborn and up!





Tungtoos

How about one that will encourage them to stick out their tongues? Tung Toos are edible temporary tattoos for your tongue! They come in dozens of designs including festive holiday styles and kids' favorites like Monster High, Hot Wheels and Moshi Monster. Even better, they are sugar-free and fat-free.

Wikki Stix

Prove you don't need batteries, bells and whistles for your kids to be entertained for hours with Wikki Stix! Wikkies are so simple; made of wax and yarn, they stick to any surface and each other. They are non-toxic and reusable. All your kids will need is a little imagination! What are Wikki Stix? The no-tech toys kids love! Wikki Stix are made from a wax and yarn formula. They are non-toxic and endlessly reusable. Wikkies stick to any surface and each other. Make your family, your house, letters, numbers, anything you can imagine. Don't like the way it looks? Just unwind and try again. Wikki Stix are fun for kids and great for parents' sanity! They are quiet, mess-free and hours of entertainment. Wikkies have been around for two



Best DVDs...

Ninjago Masters of Spinjitzu: Rise of the Green Ninja

The four ninjas are back to help their newest ally achieve his destiny as the Green Ninja when Warner Bros. Home Entertainment (WBHE) and The LEGO Group release LEGO® Ninjago Masters of Spinjitzu: Rise of the Green Ninja. Now in its second season, LEGO Ninjago Masters of Spinjitzu continues to be the #1 rated show on Cartoon Network with boys ages 6-11. The DVD includes the first seven action-packed episodes from season two, as viewers follow the Green Ninja on his path to fulfill his destiny and the four ninjas prepare to battle an even more powerful Lord Garmadon.



Original Christmas Classics Blu-ray or DVD box set (both versions available)

The cute and family-friendly box set contains four of the most beloved holiday TV specials of all time, including the Rankin/Bass classics "Frosty the Snowman," "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer," "Santa Claus is Comin' to Town" and "Frosty Returns." Watching these iconic TV specials are part of the American holiday tradition, just like baking cookies or trimming the Christmas tree! The holiday season just wouldn't be the same without them...The Original Christmas Classics collection will be available wherever Blu-rays and DVDs are sold.



Best Gifts for Dads...

★ BubbleBum

A wonderful gift for dad who is shuffling kids from home to activities is the portable, inflatable booster seat. BubbleBum easily deflates, rolls up, and stows away in a trunk, backpack or handbag after use. No longer does dad have to lug around an inconvenient booster seat for his children's carpools, or keep a booster in the backseat when not in use. BubbleBum fits three boosters to the backseat of a car, ideal for large families and carpools. Available in black and purple...



★ Daddy Diaper Pack

Dad can always use a little accessorizing! The brand new Daddy Diaper Pack is an alternative to a mom diaper pack, giving dad a sleek and sporty design carried like a backpack that fits all the things a dad needs for him and baby!

★ SnoozeShade for Playards

The breathable canopy that covers travel play yards. Babies can finally get the sleep they need, even if you need to share a room with your little ones with the lights on. Made from stretchy, breathable and air-permeable fabric, it's easy-to-adjust panels can be used in four different ways: to stop baby looking around and seeing distractions at eye-level; to enable baby to be in part-shade, making it easy to check on them; so baby is in full blackout where 94% of light is blocked, creating a dark environment free of visual distractions, or to block out just overhead light.



Additional Resources for Finding Toys...

Check out these two fantastic websites:

★ Dr. Toy's Best Picks Children's Products 2012

The annual toy award program was developed by noted play and child development authority, Stevanne Auerbach, PhD, (a.k.a. Dr. Toy) as a service to consumers who desire to purchase safe, affordable, educationally oriented, stimulating new toys and play products for children. Dr. Auerbach is the only PhD evaluating toys and children's products with extensive training, background and over 40 years of experience evaluating, writing and speaking about toys and children's products. Dr. Auerbach is trained in education, child psychology, child development, and special education. She is a parent educator, consultant, parent and grandparent.

Check out the online magazine, Dr. Toy's Guide, at <http://www.drtoy.com>

★ Citrus Lane

Discover the newest and best parenting finds with Citrus Lane! Each month, Citrus Lane delivers a box of parent-recommended products—tailored to your child's needs—right to your doorstep. Citrus Lane offers free shipping nationwide and is available as a 3, 6 or 12-month gift package or a monthly subscription.

www.community.citruslane.com/gift-guide or visit them on Facebook at www.facebook.com/CitrusLaneKids





Educational Toys?

by Georgia Lewis



There are over 150,000 toys on the market, and more are introduced every year. Many of these are touted as “educational”, suggesting that children who own them will learn more, be smarter, do better in school, or in some other way intellectually surpass those who don’t.

How valid are these claims? How important is it that a toy be “educational”? And what is an education toy, anyway?

Big Business

Some of the most poorly designed toys are mistakenly thought to be “educational” because they claim to “teach a lesson” in a formal, academic way. Flash cards, alphabet games, workbooks and educational kits that promise to teach toddlers to read or increase a child’s I.Q. are aggressively marketed by advertisers who know how anxious parents are to help their kids succeed in school.

Parents should not be fooled by these marketing gimmicks. Products that push drills and rote learning or promote pencil and paper activities may remind parents of school, but they are not educational toys—in fact, they ignore the way children really learn.

Education (whether at home or at school), cannot be imposed upon children. As Galileo once said, “You cannot teach a man anything. You can only help him discover it within himself.” Real learning requires the active participation of children’s own minds and bodies.

How Children Learn

Children learn through play—active, open-ended, hands-on, self-directed play. For children, play is serious business. As they play, they explore their world, try on roles, try out ideas, figure out how things work, stretch their imaginations, build strong bodies, solve problems, gather information and learn how to get along with others. These activities develop the skills children need for academic success.

If play is... as one expert said, “the work of children”, then toys are the tools of their trade. Good toys pique their curiosity, invite them to investigate their environment, and stretch their minds. Good toys don’t “perform” for children. They don’t direct them to do things in structured, prescribed steps.

Instead, they invite them to discover, to seek their own answers, to create their own structures. And, many of the best toys, which facilitate this kind of learning are simple and inexpensive.

Toys Are Tools for Learning

Children learn when they are actively solving problems, experimenting, figuring out how things work, using their imaginations,

and creating music or artwork, games or stories. They learn when they try on different roles or try out different muscles. They learn from the give and take of relationships—negotiating, cooperating, sharing, and compromising. Good toys help these kinds of things happen. An educational toy:

- Actively involves the children;
- Operates by child power and imagination (rather than batteries or electricity)
- Challenges children at their level of development (is not too easy or too frustrating);
- Can be used in many ways, or at least more than one way;
- Is process-oriented, rather than product-oriented (for example, paints, brushes and plain paper are better than “color-by-number” pictures);
- Is sturdy and safe, to withstand trial-and-error usage;
- Will grow with the children (is unstructured and open-ended, and can thus be used in increasingly complex ways.)

Less Valuable Toys

Less valuable toys are those that make spectators of children that perform without engaging the child in the play. Simply watching a car race in circles on its’ own power, or listening to a doll repeat a series of phrases over and over has limited play value. These kinds of toys quickly become boring and do not stretch minds, imaginations or muscles.

If your child is begging for such a toy, and you can well afford it, there is no real harm in buying it. But don’t spend your entire toy budget on such toys. The more a child can do with a toy, the more educational it is. Educational toys provide options and choices, rather than ready paths to predictable outcomes.

Toys as Transmitters of Values

Intellectual development is not the only factor to consider when toy shopping. Children learn other important things from the toys their parents choose to buy for them. They learn about your values. If you are buying war toys, you are approving war play. If you buy only dolls and costumes for your daughter, and only puzzles and science toys for your son, you are encouraging certain gender roles.

Peer (and Advertising) Pressures

Your children may beg for exorbitantly prices, cheap-looking toys promoting the latest movie. Television ads scream, “Be the first on your block to get the newest...” Your daughter wails, “I’m the only kid who doesn’t have...” Nothing on your twins’ holiday

lists seems to meet the “good toy” criteria we’ve been discussing; in fact, you know the toys your children crave are fads—flimsy and a foolish use of your money. But it’s hard to fight the pressure. What do you do?

If the toys are in some way offensive, you can refuse to buy them and explain why. If your twins are old enough to understand, you can do some consumer education. Compare the advertising claims and the glamorized TV image to the real thing in the toy store. If your objection is that the toy will easily break, and if it doesn’t cost that much, you can purchase one and let the children learn from experience.

Although many of the toys children long for may seem to be poor investments, it’s important to respect their needs and preferences by giving them what they want at least some of the time. If everyone else really does have a particular toy, and your daughter will be left out of the neighborhood play without it, provide it if it meets your approval and you can afford it.

If your son passionately requests a certain toy for his birthday, honor his choice unless there is something truly objectionable or dangerous about it.

Toys That Are Not Toys

Some of the best educational toys aren’t found in the toy stores. Consider these alternatives:

- Try shopping in kitchen stores. They sell nested measuring cups for babies; pitchers, funnels and basters for toddlers’ water play; cookie cutters and garlic presses for play dough; and small-sized pots, pans and plastic dishes that are realistic and last longer than the toy variety. Cookbooks, stock spices, other cooking basics and safe kitchen utensils are great learning tools for older children.
- Hardware stores are treasure troves! Buy various shapes of pipes and fittings for a unique preschool building toy. Fasten all kinds of locks to a wooden board for toddlers to open and close. Get a length of hose for your preschool firefighter. For older children, fill a tool box with real tools; add nails, wood scraps, paint and your own help and guidance.
- Visit a second-hand store or maybe your mother’s attic. Start with a big box or trunk, decorated and personalized, for dress-ups. Fill it with fancy PJs, scarves, hats, jewels, ties, briefcases, purses, etc. Add a mirror to admire the results. You can add props such as tickets and hold punches for playing train or theater; stethoscopes and bandages for playing hospital; medals and trophies and cash registers and clipboards and...let your imagination run wild!
- Interest your children in collections and hobbies. Start them off with a few coins, rocks, and shells, whatever. Add some labels, a book for identification purposes, and boxes with small compartments for organizing. Collections are wonderful for sorting, classifying, counting and labeling.
- Make up a box of art supplies—paints, markers, crayons, different kinds of paper, wallpaper samples, fabric remnants, ribbons, laces, paint chips and interesting scraps. For older children, get craft materials, sewing supplies and kits.

Also check out balls and sports equipment like stopwatches, pedometers or bike gear; simple musical instruments (kazooes, harmonicas, tambourines, kalimbas); puppets and magic sets; games and puzzles; tickets to plays, concerts and ball games; subscriptions to magazines; simple digital cameras; journals, diaries and scrapbooks; computer games and equipment; radios, recorders, MP3 players and CDs.

Computer caution: Computers are great when kids use them actively to write stories or play games. Video games and other high-tech products can be stimulating, exciting and educational—if they are not overused. Don’t forget the vital connection: the human one! Social and emotional development are important elements of learning.

Toys And Twins

You may have noticed that many of the items listed above can be used by children of many ages, and that most of the play materials can be easily used by more than one child. Other toys especially good ones for multiples are:

- Things that invite cooperation—floor puzzles, games, large sets of building blocks or bricks (enough pieces for two to play, or two different sets for taking turns);
- Things that require a playmate—seesaws, wagons, balls, telephones;
- All kinds of props for dramatic play (much more fun for two than one);
- Personalized sets of similar “stuff”—One mom made two rainy day collage boxes, each labeled with the child’s name and decorated with pictures of his own favorite things;
- Boxes or chests with padlocks for each child to keep her most treasured possessions off-limits to the other.

Toys are just one of many factors that promote a child’s cognitive development. (Books are so important that they deserve a whole column of their own!) Learning flourishes in the context of loving parent-child interactions. Toys are no substitute for the time you spend with your children. ♥

Georgia Lewis resides in Potomac, Maryland and is a parent education specialist for the Montgomery County Public School system and the mother of seven children, including fraternal twins.



MAKING TIME By Steven Jeffries sajeffries@rogers.com

For EACH TWIN

When you first have twins, you come to realize how much work it is taking care of two babies or children at the same time. My wife, Lisa, and I also knew that we needed to find time for each of our twins. What we didn't realize was how much of a challenge this would actually be in our daily lives. One day I was checking out the TWINS Magazine Facebook page and a mother posed the question of how to make time for each of her twins. I did make a suggestion on her post that very day, which I will share shortly, but added that this question would make a good article and I might just write one. Here's hoping the answers do make for an interesting discourse because I have done just that. Here are five key ways we have found to make time for each twin individually.

1. Running Errands

The mother who posed the question on Facebook mentioned that she used errands for both herself and her husband to each take a twin for some individual time. This is definitely worthwhile and my wife and I have done this countless times over the first five plus years of twin parenthood. Sometimes it can be one parent with one of the twins, allowing the other sibling some time by him or herself or spending time with the other parent. Other times, you can both do errands, each taking a child along (depending on whether the twins have other siblings or not). Both my son and daughter love to go to the fruit store with my wife and help her push and fill the small shopping baskets there. My son is not that keen on grocery shopping, but he doesn't mind short trips to Walmart or a bakery to get fresh bagels (and sometimes a cookie!).

2. Individual Programs and Homework

Once your twins turn about three, you probably will start signing them up for activities of interest to them. There may be programs they attend together, but in the case of my son and daughter, they began to have different interests. My son started to attend Sport-ball programs and I went with him at the beginning because they were "Dad and Me" programs. It was a great time spent together. Meanwhile, my wife took my daughter to both gymnastics and dance. At gymnastics she helped my daughter on the various apparatus. The programs as they get older will become drop off, but that means you have the opportunity to spend time with the other child, if scheduling permits. And even after the program, when you are picking them up, provides time to share a snack and to chat with your child individually about their program.

School age kids begin to get homework and this may be an opportunity for a parent to spend some time individually with one child. Even with our pair in kindergarten, there are times when they want to read to us or to work on their printing or sound workbooks. My wife or I work with each child individually so they get the needed attention they deserve. With older children, each parent might have a child that they help with homework, or perhaps divide it up according to subject area. As an elementary teacher, I remind my students' parents that reading together is still beneficial, even after a child is capable of reading independently, so adding this to your routine also allows for special time with each twin.



3. Play Dates

When twins are babies, play dates often are more for the parents than for the children (although we may not admit this). But when our children got to pre-school and school age, play dates actually began to serve a dual purpose. Each twin gets to spend time with a special friend and can develop a friendship independent of his or her sibling. At the same time, a parent or parents have an opportunity to spend time with the other twin. If you are hosting the play date for one of your children, it makes some sense for the other parent to take the second child (or other children) out of the house to free the play date friends from disruptions.

If you are dropping off one twin at a friend's house for a play date, one or both parents might want to take the other out for a special outing. We have taken our son and daughter to parks and out for ice cream while one is at a play date. In cases where one child is invited to a birthday party, the same opportunity arises, particularly if it is a drop off situation. Another way to make time for one twin for some parents is to have the other one spend some special time with willing grandparents or an aunt and uncle.

4. Special Days

If possible, it is great if you can find a day or an afternoon for both parents to spend

with an individual twin. You can use some of the methods that I discussed earlier, but summer holidays may also provide an opportunity, especially if the kids are enrolled in either a summer day care program, or individual community programs or camps, where taking them out for a day is easy and not costly. Since we have a season's pass to a nearby amusement park, this was one place we took them to individually. Our son and daughter were able to select only the rides each wanted to go on, and had both parents' attention the entire time! Other options for "special days" include a splash pad, a movie, a play, sporting event, or performance that one twin may be interested in but not the other, or even a lunch out at a favorite restaurant.

5. Parent – Twin Switch Ups

One final suggestion is for each parent to spend some time doing an activity with a twin and then after awhile switch either the siblings or the parents. My wife and I try this particularly when we want to separate the kids from each other—before they drive each other and their parents crazy! We have a park very near our house, so we have even taken one child to the park while the other stays inside with the second parent. Other ideas for these switch ups include playing board or video games, cooking with each twin, reading to or with them, or even building Lego or a train set, or having a "tea party".

In today's busy daily life, especially with twins, it is often difficult to find time for each of our offspring whom we love so much. Hopefully, some of these suggestions that have worked for my family and others are helpful. I do know that the one-on-one times that I have had with my boy and girl have been a few of the ones that I will cherish the most. ♥

10 Lessons to Teach continued from page 8

back to the time when you built sand castles, blew bubbles, and played hide-n-seek. Take time to play (pretend), to read, to cuddle, to make angels in the snow.

Lesson #9

Never let go of your dream. Children are born with believing hearts, thinking that all their dreams will come true (My son Colin dreams of being Santa Claus when he gets bigger.) Reclaim your dreams of your youth. It's never too late to do what you want to do! We must teach our children to build their dreams of steel.

Lesson #10

Have a life of your own. As a mother, I love my children, but they are not my life. We need to remember that first we are a person, then we are a parent. Making school lunches, changing dirty diapers, and attending Little League games are important, but children grow up and away. Make time for yourself now and make it count! We must discover what makes us happy and well balanced. It's good for children (young or old) to know their parents have a healthy life of their own.

I've changed while learning these 10 important lessons. My three children have made a new person out of me. I appreciate life more, take the good with the bad, make the most of today, and have recaptured some childhood dreams. I encourage you to incorporate these lessons in your own life. ♥

Steven Jeffries is an elementary teacher, husband to family photographer Lisa, and father to five year old twins. He resides near Toronto, Canada. You can read his blog at <http://atwinsdad.blogspot.ca>



MIXED CHORUS

by Jacqueline Davidson Kopito and Amy Davidson Lombardo



When I was in the 6th grade, everyone wanted to be in the “Mixed Chorus,” but only the best singers were chosen for this elite group. It was the “cool” thing at the time to be involved in and everyone tried out. Being in the Mixed Chorus separated you from the amateurs, and made you feel privileged and special—particularly if you were a 6th grader.

My twin sister, Amy and I who have completely different singing abilities, were both trying out for the Mixed Chorus and offered encouragement to one another. Amy has a beautiful voice and can easily carry a tune, but I on the other hand sing totally off-key. In fact, some people say I am tone deaf, but I sing anyway.

The big day to audition finally arrived and everyone was very excited. I was feeling extremely nervous and hoped and prayed I would make the cut. Anyone who was anybody was in the Mixed Chorus. All the cute boys made the Mixed Chorus, and I knew I had to make it, but I wasn’t sure if I even stood a chance. In trepidation, I slowly entered the music room and there was the music teacher seated at her piano motioning me to come in. “OK, let’s hear what you can do”, she said. I began singing and only got through one verse when I was abruptly cut off. She clearly had heard enough from me. I knew then I was doomed.

The announcement was made the following afternoon and it came as no surprise that I was not chosen. Regardless, I was still crushed! The good news was that Amy made it. Amy was in her glory and I was excited for her. I was always happy when something good happened to my twinny and of course this still holds true today.

Amy was busy going to all the rehearsals, but she felt sad that I was not included, especially because she knew how much I wanted to be in the group. She knew she had to do something for me and being the clever twin that she is, Amy came up with a plan for me to sing in the Mixed Chorus, but first I had to learn the songs. Amy brought home all the singing material for me to practice and instructed me on everything from where to stand to how to follow the music teacher’s lead on the Big Night. We practiced

by singing every day. I sang in the shower, on our walks to school, while walking around the house and before I went to sleep at night. We also covered every detail from what we were going to wear to which lip gloss color to put on for the Big Night. It had to be perfect. I was so grateful to Amy for having done this for me. That’s my twinny, always thinking of me.

The Big Night finally came! There were two performances scheduled, the first one was at 5:00 PM and the other at 6:30 PM. Amy sang in the first show which concluded with many rounds of applause. Then the performers left the stage and went to the music room to take a break before the next performance. Amy ducked into the bathroom instead where we had planned to meet, and wished me good luck, as I quickly left to join the other performers in the music room. After a few very long minutes, we all lined up to go “back on stage” for the second performance.

I was very excited being on stage and sang like I never had before. The first two songs had gone well and I had just a few more to go. I couldn’t believe how smoothly everything was going and how my dream had actually come true. I was singing in the Mixed Chorus with everyone else and I felt like I was on top of the world. Then it was time to sing the last song, Both Sides Now by Judy Collins, which was my favorite. I was feeling so exhilarated that I began to belt out the words without a care in the world. All of a sudden everyone started staring at me including the teacher who had a bizarre look on her face. Everyone in the audience as well as on stage knew that I was singing way off-key, and my voice was overpowering the others by far. I felt myself turning a deep shade of red and I got a little embarrassed, but I wasn’t about to give up my moment of fame, so I continued to belt out the rest of the song. I saw Amy seated in the audience and she waved at me, happy as could be that we were able to pull off this crazy plan. To this day no one ever found out that Amy and I had switched places during the intermission. Thanks twinny!

Final Twinny Thought:

Everyone wants to be heard!

BOTTLE HOLDERS




Bottle Snugglers
Feeding Time Helper™

Save 10% online
with code **TWINS10**

See our display ad on Page 11

DNA TESTING



AFFILIATED GENETICS

Are Your Twins Identical?

Many people are given misinformation at the time of birth. Affiliated Genetics has been providing the public with affordable, accurate DNA testing since 1994.

Twin Zygosity Test: \$150 plus \$10 s/h

Paternity Screen: \$325 plus \$10 s/h

- Results mailed within 7 business days
- Personalized, helpful service

All test results are reviewed and reported by a Board Certified Geneticist.

PO Box 58535 Salt Lake City, UT 84158
Tel: 801-582-4200 Fax: 801-582-8460

Visa/MC accepted Personal checks Money orders

Contact us toll free at: 1-800-362-5599
www.affiliatedgenetics.com

See our display ad on Page 9

EQUIPMENT

DoubleBlessings.com • 1(800)584-TWIN
Designed GREEN for a new generation of eco-minded mothers and their babies

San Diego Baby Twin
Eco-Nursing Pillow
Deluxe Privacy Pillow for Twins

Hypo-allergenic • Non-toxic
Non-flammable • Recyclable
Odor-free • Glue-free
Foam-free • Lead-free
Phthalate-free

The Original Twin Nursing Pillow since 1995...just got better!

JEWELRY



Designed and made by a mom of twins!

Custom Bracelets by Lisa

Sterling Silver and Gold Mother's Name Bracelets, Birthstone Bracelets, Grandmothers Bracelets, Children's and Baby Bracelets

303-362-1441
www.custombraceletsbylisa.com

See our display ad on Page 17

TWIN ZYGOSITY TEST

- Easy, at-home testing.
- 99% + Accuracy.
- Results in 7-10 business days.
- \$150 plus \$10 S/H includes testing for both twins.

PRO GEN
ProactiveGenetics

Call 1-866-894-6362
www.proactivegenetics.com

myBrest Friend
THE BEST FOR BREASTFEEDING

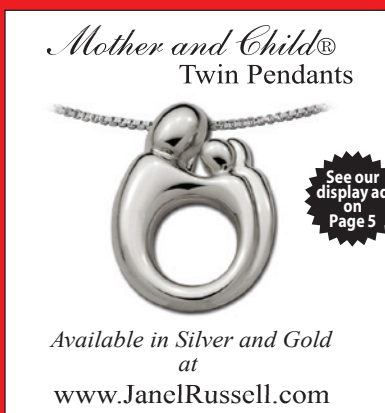


See our display ad on Page 7

www.mybrestfriend.com/twins

Your Business Here Contact
advertising@twinsmagazine.com
place your ad or call toll-free
888-55-TWINS

Mother and Child®
Twin Pendants



See our display ad on Page 5

Available in Silver and Gold
at
www.JanelRussell.com

tabletwo
www.buytablefortwo.com



See our display ad on Page 13

SUPPORT

Connect with thousands of other parents that really get it...
Oh and we have our hands full, too!

Join the TWINS Magazine Message Board Forum

It's Fun & FREE so join us today!

TwinsMagazine.com

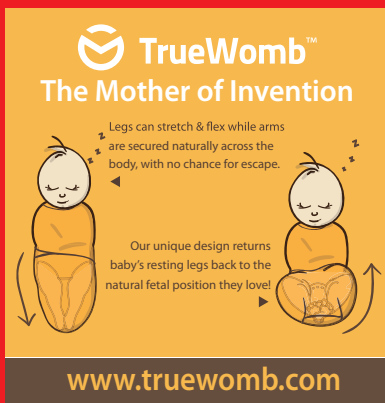
Join the Conversation!

The Magazine for Multiples Since 1994!

TWINS
www.TwinsMagazine.com

facebook twitter

TrueWomb™
The Mother of Invention



Legs can stretch & flex while arms are secured naturally across the body, with no chance for escape.

Our unique design returns baby's resting legs back to the natural fetal position they love!

www.truewomb.com



TTTS

Get the Facts on this Deadly Fetal Disorder That Kills More Babies than SIDS!

What exactly is TTTS or Twin-to-Twin Transfusion-Syndrome?

TTTS or Twin-to-Twin Transfusion Syndrome is a disease of the placenta. It affects pregnancies with monochorionic (shared placenta) multiples when blood passes disproportionately from one baby to the other through connecting blood vessels within their shared placenta. One baby, the recipient twin, gets too much blood overloading his or 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.

15 Most Important Questions to Ask Your Doctor:

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?

*source: TTTS Foundation

Left untreated, mortality rates near 100%. This fetal syndrome kills more babies each year than SIDS yet hardly anyone has ever heard of it!

The cause of TTTS is attributed to unbalanced flow of blood through vascular channels that connect the circulatory systems of each twin via the common placenta. The shunting of blood through the vascular communications leads to a net flow of blood from one twin (the donor) to the other twin (the recipient). The donor twin develops oligohydramnios (low amniotic fluid) and poor fetal growth, while the recipient twin develops polyhydramnios (excess amniotic fluid), heart failure, and hydrops. If left untreated, the pregnancy may be lost due to lack of blood getting to the smaller twin, fluid overload and heart failure in the larger twin, and/or preterm (early) labor leading to miscarriage of the entire pregnancy.

Some general treatment approaches consist of using laser energy to seal off the blood vessels that shunt blood between the fetuses. Because the surgical approach is via an operative fetoscope, there is minimal risk to the mother. Laser therapy for TTTS has been shown to provide improved pregnancy outcomes compared to alternative therapies. Although all treatment options should be discussed with your fetal surgeon.

Frequency

1 in 7 monochorionic pregnancies are afflicted with TTTS.

Diagnosis and Staging

The in utero diagnosis of TTTS is established by ultrasound. First, the presence of a shared placenta (monochorionic) confirmed. Ultrasounds performed earlier in the pregnancy may be useful in establishing the chorionicity (number of placentas). Ultrasound findings such as a single placenta, same fetal sex, and a "T-sign" in which the dividing membrane inserts perpendicular to the placenta are helpful in diagnosing a monochorionic twin gestation.

TTTS is then diagnosed simply by assessing the discordance of amniotic fluid volume on either side of the dividing fetal membranes. The maximum vertical pocket (MVP) of amniotic fluid volume must be greater than or equal to 8.0 centimeters in the recipient's sac, and less than or equal to 2.0 centimeters in the donor's sac.

Although TTTS is diagnosed via ultrasound, women with a monochorionic or

monoamniotic pregnancy can be alerted to certain symptoms that may require medical attention. Symptoms may include a sudden increase in the size of the pregnant belly, a sudden increase in fatigue or pressure in the belly or back, and/or sudden unexplained increase in weight (eg. 7 lbs in a week or less).

Once the diagnosis of TTTS is established, the severity of the condition may be assessed using the Quintero Staging System, as listed below. This staging system is based on the observations of several hundred patients with TTTS. Not only does this staging system mirror the progression of disease, but it has also been shown to be important in establishing the prognosis. An atypical presentation of TTTS may occur if the fetal bladder of the donor twin remains visible despite the presence of critically abnormal fetal Dopplers or hydrops.

Learn more about TTTS and locate the more than 20 medical centers that specialize in treating those afflicted by TTTS by visiting The Fetal Hope Foundation's website at: www.FetalHope.org

*source: The Fetal Hope Foundation

Seeking Support...

There are currently (2) two national nonprofit organizations dedicated to helping families diagnosed and afflicted with TTTS (Twin-to-Twin-Transfusion-Syndrome)

The Fetal Hope Foundation—A leading resource for supporting, fighting and ending fetal syndromes is headquartered in Denver, Colorado. This nonprofit organization hosts a national 5K Run/Walk Series called the Race for Fetal Hope 5K. This fun, family event includes a 5K Run/Walk; Stroller Division; Kids Fun Run & Family Festival and is held throughout the country in cities like Denver, Colorado; Seattle, Washington; and Atlantic Beach, Florida. Learn more by visiting their informative website at: www.FetalHope.org

The TTTS Foundation—Since 1989, is an international nonprofit support organization headquartered in Bay Village, Ohio solely dedicated to saving the lives of diagnosed twin and triplet babies. The organization hosts the annual TTTS World Awareness Day each year on December 7th which also includes a 5K walk called the Matthew & Steven TTTS Walk for the Babies. Learn more about the TTTS Foundation by visiting: <http://www.tttsfoundation.org/>

TTTS-Two Survival Stories

RENÉE'S STORY

by ReNée Beau Bixler

I had wanted twins my whole life, so the day I found out I was pregnant with twins was the happiest day of my life! However, my pregnancy was not the dream I had expected. I spent my pregnancy fearful for my babies and terrified to become attached to them because no one knew if they were going to survive.

At my eight week appointment when the doctor told me I was having twins she also told me it looked like they were developing "Twin-to-Twin-Transfusion-Syndrome or TTTS". My doctor suspected I had TTTS because "Baby B" (Addison) was not growing as much as "Baby A" (Peyton) which is one of the symptoms of TTTS. Her fluid levels were a bit less than her sister's, too which was another indication they had TTTS.

This is when I learned that TTTS affects 20% of identical twin pregnancies with a shared placenta, which mine was. Thankfully, my doctor knew enough about Twin-to-Twin-Transfusion-Syndrome to refer me to a local specialist who monitored me on a weekly basis.

On the day that I was told I had to deliver, "Baby A" (Peyton) had only a 10% chance of survival and "Baby B" (Addison) was at 0% survival rate because she was not going to grow anymore and was losing her fluid. My doctor told me that if I leave them inside and try to go to term, I would lose Addison, because she would be still born. She also could not promise me that Peyton would make it either but told us, "she might." Delivery was our only option to increase their survival rate, so my daughters were born at exactly 28 weeks gestation. Peyton was born weighing 2lbs 7oz and Addison was born weighing 1lb 12oz.

My twin girls, who we refer to as "Teeny" and "Tiny", had a rough start to life and Peyton spent 66 days and Addison spent 72 days in



the NICU, but they both fought so hard and they thrived! Now, they are healthy, happy 15-month-old perfect baby girls!

I wish all parents that have been effected by TTTS could say the same thing about their twins, but sadly this is not the norm. So many people are unaware of this condition and sadly many doctors

are uninformed of the many treatment options out there that can increase survival rates. We wanted to share our story to bring awareness to this syndrome and to encourage mothers pregnant with twins to find out early what kind of twin pregnancy you have, ask the appropriate questions of your doctors, and know that if there is just one placenta then you are at risk and need to be sure your doctor is monitoring you with frequent ultrasounds. The best advice I can give to expectant mothers of twins is to get informed and find the resources out there available to you.

ASHLEY'S STORY

by Ashley Orosz

Over two years ago, I was seeing my second doctor after my first OB/GYN could not tell me if my twins were identical or not. She (my first OB) had told me to wait until they are six months old to see if they look alike! So at 16 weeks gestation, I fortunately made the switch to a high risk OB/GYN named Dr. Khouzami from Conemaugh Hospital in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. At my first appointment, he was able to tell me that my babies were identical twin boys and he explained to me exactly what the fetal disorder called Twin-to-Twin-Transfusion-Syndrome (TTTS) was. At that time I never imagined that it would happen to me, but at 22 weeks gestation he gave us the diagnosis that my babies were afflicted with Twin-to-Twin-Transfusion-Syndrome. What was happening in my case was that because my babies shared one placenta and within that placenta there were all kinds of blood vessels, they also shared some blood vessels. That then caused one baby to get overloaded with blood, causing his heart to thicken and with an extra amount of amniotic fluid, prevented the baby from producing more urine. My other baby wasn't getting enough blood and could have caused anemia or made him become "saran wrapped" from not getting enough blood and producing urine, which would then cause more problems and in many cases DEATH!

So as soon as I was diagnosed at 22 weeks gestation, Dr. Khouzami referred me to the Children's Hospital Of Philadelphia (CHOP) for a consultation for laser ablation surgery (<http://www.chop.edu/service/fetal-diagnosis-and-treatment/fetal-diagnoses/twin-twin-transfusion-syndrome-ttts.html>) This ground breaking surgery connects blood vessels in the placenta between my twin boys.

Scared, worried and full of tears, it was certainly the worst day of my life when I was diagnosed with TTTS. We were on our way to CHOP the next day and three days later at 22 weeks/4 days gestation, we had in-utero laser ablation surgery performed on my placenta that my twin boys shared. The first 24 hours were crucial for the two of them. TTTS is a quick moving DISEASE that could have easily taken their life. By the grace of God, we still had two beating hearts inside my belly! We returned home after a 10 day stay in Philadelphia and I was on strict bed rest with a 3-year-old toddler at home with me. At 31 weeks gestation my water broke prematurely which is an often a result of TTTS and having laser

ablation surgery. We quickly drove to Conemaugh Hospital in Johnstown, Pennsylvania which is a 45 minute drive from our town, and was quickly admitted. The nurses and Dr. Khouzami did everything they could to keep me from delivering early. I was in the hospital for two more weeks until I delivered my boys on May 15, 2010 at 33 weeks 5 days gestation. They were both 4 lbs 2 ounces and 16 inches long and spent 10 days in the RICU. They recently turned two and are by far our living, breathing miracles.



Double Takes



1 Jackson & Weston -FR
Age: 3 weeks old in the photo
New Florence, PA



2 Makenzie & Holden -FR
Age: 6
Watertown NY



3 Faith & Hope -ID
Age: 6
Cabot, AR



7 Alana Mai & Freya Grace
on their first Christmas. -ID
Age: 3 months in photo
Bishops Stortford Hertforshire UK



8 Connor & Aubrey -FR
Age: 8 months
Madisonville, LA



12 Luke & Alex -ID
Age: 4
Sandy, Utah



13 Logan & Lincoln -ID
Age: 1 yr 8 mo in the photo
Aurora, Colorado



17 Luke & Leia -FR
Age: 6 months in photo now—
currently 17 months
Pleasant Prairie, WI



18 Jonah & Noah -ID
Age: 10 months in photo
Petal, MS

Holiday 2012



Isley & Zilare-ID
Age: 5
San Francisco, CA



Logan & Alyssa-FR
Age: 6 months in photo now
16 months
Wilmington, Delaware



Olivia & Clair-FR
Age: 16 months
Round Lake, IL



Madison & Grace-ID
Age: 4 1/2 yrs old
Hudson, MA



Kaylee & Liam -FR
Age: 6 weeks
Lavon, TX



Shane & Tyler-FR
Age: 4 months in the picture—now age 9
Highlands Ranch, CO



Nella & Lily-ID
Age: 3 years old
Knoxville, Tennessee



Alicia Julienne & Connor Alain-FR
Age: 2 1/2 now
(8 months old in picture)
Woonsocket, RI



Hunter & Tristan-FR
Age: 2 in photo—now age 4
Goose Creek, SC



Mason & Grant-FR
Age: 11 months
St Louis, MO



Matthew & Davis-FR
Age: 5 months in photo—
now age 5
Kernersville, North Carolina



Joshua & Kelsey -FR
Age: 5
McDade, Texas



22

Abby & Bella—ID
Age: 3
Thornton, Colorado



23

Catie & Charlie—FR
Age: 4.5 years old (at time of photo)
Jackson, California



24

Jace & Baylee —FR
Age: 10 months in photo
Vine Grove, Kentucky



25

Violet Brittni & Leighton Laci—ID
Age: 10 1/2 months
Clayton, North Carolina



26

Gabriel & Gavin—ID
Age: 4
Richland Center, WI



27

Haley & Taylor—FR
Age: 20 months
Jamestown NC.



28

Abby & Avery—ID
Age: 4
Greensburg, PA



29

Mateo & Sebastian—ID
Age: 11 months
Denver, CO



30

Abigail & Anja—ID
Age: 3
Abbotsford, BC (Canada)



31

Kevin & Kyle—ID
Age 11 years old—Also, pictured is
Cousin Maureen (9 years old) whose
wonderful mother passed away of
breast cancer last year.
Cornwall, New York



32

Kylie & Kassidie—ID
Age: 2 and 1/2 months old in photo
Calimesa, California
(Santa in this picture is Daddy!)



33

Abigail Jayne, Alexander Justin, Aaden
James and Ava Jeanne—Two Sets of
Fraternal Twins—Boys are age 3 and Girls
are age 3-months—Hogansburg, NY



by Sandra Johnston

Just Once

I would...

Imagine something that you would like to do—even if only just once.

This was a suggestion for relaxation given by my Lamaze instructor before the birth of my oldest son, Seth. At that point in my life, I remember dreams of excitement, freedom and escape meant skiing down the slopes of the Colorado Rockies, rising high in a hot air balloon above a flowering meadow in Holland, deep-sea diving off the coast of the Bahamas, or similar exotic or exhilarating experiences.

Seven and a half years and three sons later (including my 2-year-old twins, Clayton and Dustin), I have developed a slightly different perspective.

Here is an updated list of the things that I would really like to do – just once...

Just once, I would like to walk through my living room without stepping on a toy car, action figure or plastic block.

Just once, I'd like to sit and look out of my front window without having to squint to see around the hand prints.

Just once, I'd like to mop my kitchen floor and go an entire day without a juice spill.

Just once, I would like to not have a load of clothes in my washing machine, a load of clothes in my dryer and two half-full laundry hampers.

Just once, I'd like to sit on my sofa without tearing down tents or having to replace cushions first.

Just once, I would like to make it through an entire day without even hearing the words, "That's mine!" or "He did it!"

Just once, I'd like to enjoy a full meal (whether at home or at a restaurant) without taking anyone to the bathroom.

Just once, I would like to have my pharmacy bill completely paid off.

Just once, I'd like to get my whole family dressed for church, and not have to spot-clean or re-dress anyone.

Just once, I'd like to take a 15-minute car ride without being hit by a shoe or a sock.

Just once, I would like to go to a "real" movie theater and see a "real" movie that has real actresses and actors—not simply voices behind animated characters.

Just once, I'd like to take my family out into public without hearing someone comment, "You surely have your hands full!"

Just once, I would like to take my children out into public without having to say, "I'm sorry," or "Let me help you clean that up!"

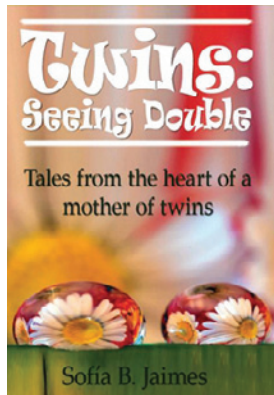
As you can see, my "just onces" have changed dramatically, just as my life has changed dramatically over the last seven and a half years. Yet, even with my hectic lifestyle, I really am only requesting these things "just once".

This leads me to the second thought that our Lamaze teacher asked us to envision—something "truly relaxing and peaceful", which accurately describes my personal routine after my children are all tucked away in bed each night.

After all the bedtime stories are read and the nighttime prayers said...after the final cups of water are drained and the trips to the bathroom concluded...after the last "Goodnight, sleep tight, don't let the bed bugs bite" is given...and the room is finally silent except for the quiet breathing of three small boys... I stand in the stillness of the night and bow my head in prayer. It is then that I acknowledge how thankful I am for having been blessed with three of the most wonderful, intelligent, beautiful and lovable boys ever created; and I ask God to please not let this demanding, chaotic time of my life pass by too quickly! ♥

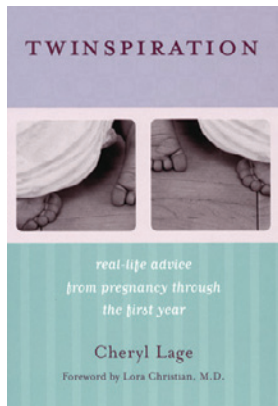
Sandra Johnston
lives in Judsonia,
Arkansas and is a special
education teacher and
the mother of three sons,
including identical twins.

To place your order, click on the product or call (888)55-TWINS | More books available online at www.TwinsMagazine.com



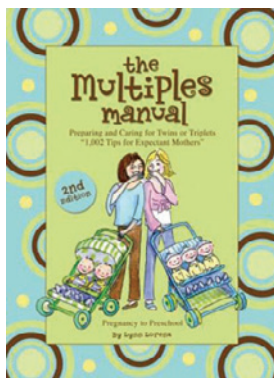
Twins: Seeing Double

Price:



Twinspiration

Price: \$16.95



The Multiples Manual

Price: \$17.95



Twice the Love

Price: \$13.95



Oh Yes You Can Breastfeed Twins!

Price: \$19.95



Emotionally Healthy Twins

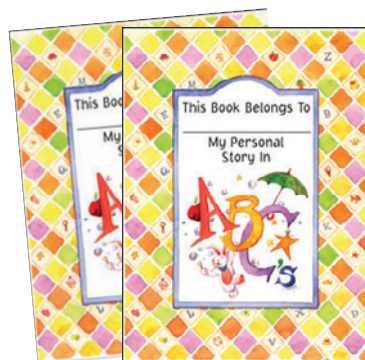
Price: \$15.95



A Very Special Twin Story

Buy one book, get the second absolutely FREE!

Price: \$7.95



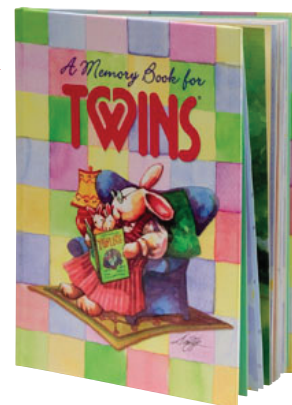
My Personal Story in ABCs

Buy one book, get the second absolutely FREE!

Price: \$7.95

Lifetime Memory Books

Price: \$10.95



Twins Growth Chart

Price: \$15.95

Visit our website for more information any of these products.