

The Magazine for Multiples Since 1984

TWINS™

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**Meet the
CuteKid™
Cutest
Twins
of 2012!**

**How to Prevent
Double the Stretch
Marks**

**Buying Advice for
Double Jogging
Strollers**

March/April 2013

**Bringing
Home Babies
*Now What?***

**Is There
a Sex Life
After Twins?**



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Raising Twins through Each Age & Stage



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All the latest & greatest products for parents & kids!

On the Cover:

Featured on our cover for this issue are 4-year-old fraternal twins CeCe and Elle from Harrisburg, Illinois. They have been recently named "The CuteKid™ Cutest Twins of 2012". You can learn more about these adorable girls and the twin photo contest inside this issue.

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PUBLISHERS

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

Regina Rubin Cody
gina@twinsmagazine.com
publisher@twinsmagazine.com

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

NATIONAL ADVERTISING DIRECTOR

Christa D. Reed
twinseditor@twinsmagazine.com

ART DIRECTOR

Michelle Kenny
artdirector@twinsmagazine.com

CUSTOMER SERVICE

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

CIRCULATION

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

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTORS

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JMary Billiter Thomas; Sharon L. Bratcher; Joshua Coleman, Ph.D.; Jacqueline Davidson Kopito; Patricia Edmister, Ph.D.; Steven Jeffries; Maisie Knowles; Christa D. Reed; Melinda Rhodes; Laura Tarbell; Karen M Trevor; Stephanie Vozza; and Karen Whitehair

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Sterling Investments I, LLC dba:
TWINS™ Magazine
30799 Pinetree Road, #256
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Spring is in the air... I love when everything turns green outside and starts to bloom. Spring is also a great time to get outdoors and enjoy your twins no matter what their age! Fresh air does wonders for babies and mom so just in time for the warm weather; inside this issue we have a great feature on advice for buying a double jogging stroller. There are so many things to consider before you buy your double jogger and we give you some fantastic tips you will definitely want to read!

Sex. Yes, I said it...and I'm sure some of you are reading this saying to yourself, "yeah right, with twins... this is the last thing on my mind!" These feelings may have even started back in your twin pregnancy when you were growing remarkably larger and feeling less like the woman you used to be and more like the elephant at the city zoo! Well did you know that many couples struggle with the issue of intimacy after the birth of a child but add twins to the mix and couples have an even larger obstacle to climb in the first year of raising twins/multiples? Did you know that for many couples sex is the biggest predictor of male satisfaction in marriage but further down the scale for most women? So we all know that our satisfaction drops much earlier than our partners because we are recovering from childbirth, dealing with all these crazy changes to our bodies, oh and throw in all those wonderful raging hormones coupled with all the laundry, sleepless nights, double feedings and diaper changes... how then do we now get in the mood? Even *50 Shade of Grey* can't help when you're too tired to think and who has time to read anyway? We are here to help because there ARE ways to get your groove back (even with twins) and inside this issue we explore this very topic in the feature article by Joshua Coleman Ph.D., "Is There a Sex Life **after** Twins? How to Get Your Groove Back" you can gain valuable information and strategies to get that spark going again for both of you!

Also inside this issue we give you great tips and advice on how to prevent "double" the stretch marks from a certified professional trainer and mom to **TWO SETS** of twins! So you've survived the twin pregnancy but now what do you do when you finally bring those twin babies home? Don't panic, we are here to give you important tips and great information on how to stay afloat... and if your twins are in the toddler stage you won't want to miss our article on "6 Steps to Potty Training Twins", no easy task but it can be done! Plus, we have a ton of other great articles including our feature on Grandparents and twins and how to define their role while utilizing their help when you need them AND we are proud to introduce "The CuteKid™ Cutest Twins of 2012" CeCe and Elle in our center feature this issue.

As we continue celebrating our 29th year as the #1 parenting magazine for twins and higher order multiples, we continue to be amazed by our readers for all they do on a daily basis to make a difference in the world of their children. For us, inspiration comes in many ways from the large acts of kindness we see to the daily sacrifices we make and the little things we do day in and day out to care for our children; so for that, we salute all parents of twins and multiples, a unique and special group of people!



Sincerely,

Christa D Reed

Christa Reed,
Editor-in-Chief

Twin sisters Kat and Margaret King co-author new book called "Y'all Twins?"



"Y'all Twins?" is a new book of hilarious stories from twin sisters Kat and Margaret King's childhood while growing up in the south during the 1950s. The true stories begin at age six hitching a ride on the back of William Faulkner's mule drawn buckboard. They have three more books coming out in 2013. The hilarity continues in their next book which will be out late spring entitled, "Which is Which?" and a pre-school book entitled,

"Kicking and Screaming" to be published this fall. In addition their book written for 3rd to 5th graders, "The Backyard Cam-pout" will be published later this summer.

These dynamic twin sisters have become quite accomplished as after dinner speakers and have begun a new way to reach people—at age 64—they are rappers! They rap for charity causes—think pink, cystic fibrosis, heart association—as well as promoting their book via raps. Many of their raps can be seen on YouTube at YallKingTwins or by clicking here.

They are definitely rising stars in many ways and we wish them all the very best from TWINS Magazine!

New Baby Journal App Hits the Market



There is a new, innovative baby journal app on the market called mementobox. The app is perfect for parents of twins and triplets because you can add as many children to the same journal as you wish. So, rather than buying a new baby book for each baby, parents are turning to mementobox because it is simple to use and its on your iPhone so you will never miss a moment, however full your hands are with the new arrivals.

The virtual baby journal

There's no denying that baby journals are beautiful but, realistically, how many new parents have time to neatly write down every momentous event in their newborn's life? There's a good chance the journal will be languishing on a shelf three years on. And what if baby laughs for the first time when you're out and about. Or takes their first steps at Grandma's house? Is there room in your changing bag for a hefty book? Or do you jot a reminder in your phone to update the book later? Enter mementobox, the virtual baby journal. Since most people have their iPhone with them all the time, they won't miss a moment. Create a keepsake of your twins birth and first year that you can easily share with friends and family.



The app is divided into three sections:

My arrival. Store your pregnancy photos and scan pictures. Tell your birth story. Take pictures of your little one's visitors and allow them to leave messages. Keep a record of gifts received and thank you notes sent.

My first year. First smile, first word, first night out for Mum. Record your child's major milestones, plus those small, but significant, occasions. Keep track of immunizations development and minor illnesses.

My world. What was the number one hit when babies were born? Who was making the headlines? What was everyone reading? Build a unique time capsule by linking to external media such as newspapers and film trailers.

Upload photographs and videos depicting key events - our suggestions are just a guide, you can add your own categories, too. You can keep your memories private within the mementobox app or share them using social media or email. For more information, visit mementobox.co.uk or facebook.com/mementoboxapp

New Fetal Test Spares Pregnant Moms the Risks of Amniocentesis

Blood-Screening Method Offered by University of Colorado Doctors Revolutionizes Prenatal Testing for Birth Defects

DENVER, April 2013 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE)—Gabrielle Stewart of Denver is pregnant and over 35 years old, which puts her in the risk group with 1 in 10 expectant moms recommended to get a fetal DNA test for birth defects. But like many women facing an amniocentesis test, which involves a chance of pregnancy loss and a six-inch needle drawing amniotic fluid, Stewart was hesitant.

"I was not keen on amniocentesis, because I was very conscious of its 1 in 300 chance of ending my pregnancy," said Stewart. "So when my doctor offered a non-invasive test, I was delighted. That was a huge relief not putting my baby at risk."

Pregnant women can now opt to detect genetic abnormalities with a new, DNA blood test that carries no risk or pain. As a result, more pregnant patients of University of Colorado School of Medicine physicians are participating in testing for genetic abnormalities. Yet many women are not familiar with this option.

"This is an enormously important advancement, because we can detect the most common chromosomal problems in the first prenatal blood draw," said Dr. Teresa Harper of the University of Colorado School of Medicine Obstetrics and Gynecology Department/Maternal Fetal Medicine division. "We do away with screening tests that create anxiety with frequent false positives and we don't put moms up against a difficult decision about a very invasive test like amniocentesis and its risk of pregnancy loss."

Harper, who is Stewart's OB/GYN, has been using the cell-free DNA testing since it became available about a year ago. She published early research with her mentor on fetal DNA appearing in maternal blood. One in 200 pregnancies involve genetic disorders, and age increases those chances, with a 40-year-old woman facing a 1 in 40 risk. Some genetic disorders are catastrophic such as Trisomy 13 or 18, in which an extra copy of chromosome number 13 or 18 means the baby is not likely to survive. Forewarned of such issues, a woman can plan for her Down syndrome child's upbringing, or consider terminating the pregnancy involving Trisomy 13 or 18.

All pregnant women over age 35 should be offered prenatal DNA testing, said Harper. So should women with a family history of a child with a genetic condition, women whose ultrasound indicates an abnormality such as Down syndrome (Trisomy 21), and those with abnormal blood screens.

Though results of the cell-free DNA test are highly accurate, women who receive a positive test result are advised to

undergo amniocentesis or chorionic villus sampling, which are slightly more accurate and test for all 46 chromosomes. Current cell-free fetal DNA testing only detects eight chromosome problems, including sex chromosome issues such as Turner syndrome.

However, Harper said cell-free fetal DNA testing is advancing rapidly and has the potential to detect issues in all 46 chromosomes.

There is wonder in
having twins in
your life...



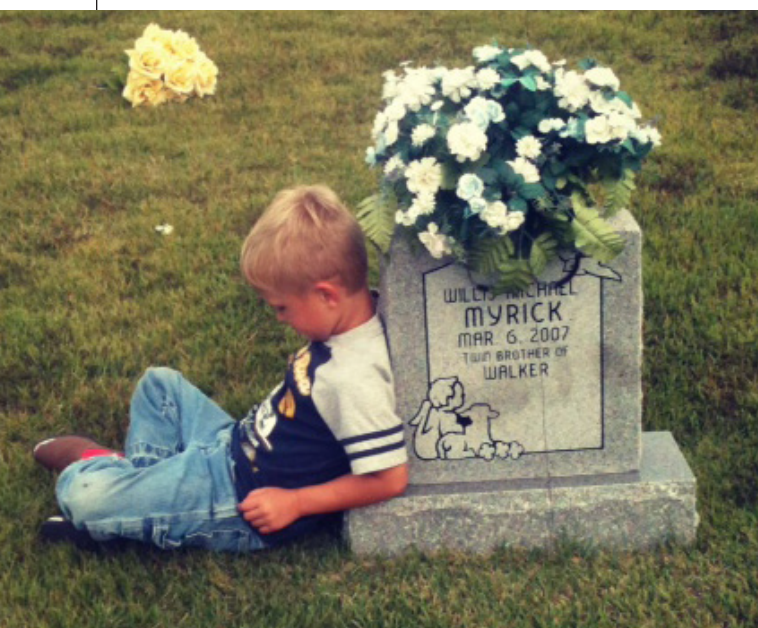
Join others in this private online
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share your wisdom and connect with
other parents!

www.MyTwinLink.com



Dear Editor:

I recently visited your website and noticed there are a lot of resources for TTTS (Twin-to-Twin-Transfusion-Syndrome) awareness. That is wonderful and it says a lot about you and your magazine that you keep TTTS in the lime light by running articles in your magazine and on your website. This means so much to me personally because my twin boys were undiagnosed because our doctor was not properly monitoring my pregnancy and tragically we lost our son Willis to this deadly disease. We were just so very blessed that his twin Walker survived. I wanted to share this photo that was taken this past summer of my twin boys. As I was getting the baby out of the car, Walker ran on ahead to visit Willis and this



is how I found him. It truly shows that the twin bond is NEVER broken and Willis is looking down on him from heaven. This picture breaks my heart and makes me smile at the same time. Anyway, thank you for all you do for the world of twins, both for those twins here and those twins we have lost.

Sincerely,
Brooke Myrick
Via email

Editor's Note: Thank you for reaching out to me and for sending in such a poignant and sweet photo of your beautiful twins to share with our readers. Our heart goes out to you and other families that have suffered a tragic loss to TTTS (Twin-to-Twin-Transfusion-Syndrome) and have been personally affected by this deadly disease. Sadly, TTTS kills more babies each year than AIDS and there are still many medical professionals that are unaware of the signs. Another important reason that if you are pregnant with multiples you seek a specialist for your prenatal care.



Dear Editor:

I wanted to share this cute picture of my 11-month-old fraternal twin boys with you! This is Ace (with Jack) and Kaden (in the car) and we live in WaKeeney, Kansas. They love racing... probably because their "Papa" races an IMCA Modified Race car so as you can tell, they plan on following in his footsteps! Racing is what I (their proud mom) grew up around and absolutely love. I know my twins will do the same because racing consumes our weekends from March through October... The twins said to say "Go Billsbuilt #27!!"

Sincerely,
Nicole Kriegshauser
Via email

Dear Twins Magazine:

I'm a fraternal twin who just published my first children's picture book about, what else, fraternal twins. The book is called "Fraturtles" and answers that number one question fraternal twins are asked, "How come fraternal twins are called twins when they don't look alike?" The book answers this question through a fun, easy-to-understand story about a twin who comes to realize that having a twin isn't about sharing their looks. It's about sharing their lives so I thought your readers would be interested in learning about this new book. You can see a few pages from it on Amazon by clicking [here](#).

Thank you,
Keith Greenstein
Via email



my Brest friend

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Things to Know about Finding the PERFECT BABYSITTER

by Stephanie Vozza

You probably wouldn't walk up to a teenage girl at the mall, ask her to hold your wallet and walk away. Yet leaving your children with a new babysitter can make you feel just as anxious ... probably even worse. How do you find a good sitter — someone you can trust? Here are five things to know before you schedule date night or a get together with friends:

KNOW WHERE TO LOOK

Other parents can be great sources of sitters, if they're willing to share! This can be your first place to look. Be sure to ask for both positive and negative feedback.

In our high-tech age, a convenient source of sitters is online referral agencies, such as Sittercity.com, UrbanSitter.com, SafeSitter.org and Care.com, which match parents with local sitters, and provide feedback and other resources.

Some churches, synagogues and neighborhood associations have lists of members who are available for babysitting. And high school and college campuses often have newsletters or bulletin boards where you can post jobs.

A new method for finding sitters is to attend mixers created to connect moms with babysitters. Kind of like speed dating, moms get a few minutes with each potential sitter to see if it's a match. MommyMixer, Sitter Mixer and Lullaby League are three organizations that hold events throughout the U.S. and Canada. Or you can organize your own.

KNOW WHAT TO LOOK FOR

After you find suitable candidates, ask for their resumes or for links to profiles provided on sites such as MommyMixer.com.

"Parents used to ask for just a phone number," says Mary Sullivan Cooper, founder of MommyMixer. "Today, they can see a sitter's experience, background and references before they set up an interview."

Genevieve Thiers, founder of Sittercity.com, says parents should set up an in-home interview with at least three sitters.

"Have each spend an hour or two with the children while the parent is still at home," she says. "It's a great opportunity for the children to be a part of the selection process. After all, they will be spending the most time with the candidate that is selected."

"You want someone who is mature, responsible and has similar personality traits as you," says Katie Bugbee of Care.com. "If you're a very tidy person, make sure that this babysitter is clean and organized. If you're silly or sporty, you'll want to look for someone who shares those qualities. Remember, this person acts as the primary caretaker, nurturer, fun-creator and rule-officiator while you're away, so you will want to feel comfortable hiring a candidate who shares your values."

"Your children will role model anyone around them, you want to choose someone who will speak to the kids as you would," adds Sullivan Cooper.

Thiers also urges parents to ask for and call each of the candidate's references. Also expect a babysitter to have safety training. The Red Cross offers a six-hour Babysitter's Training Course in many communities. Thiers values previous experience, but says look for energy and enthusiasm.

"An enthusiastic sitter won't resort to sticking the kids in front of the TV or talking on the phone for a few hours while she gets into who-knows-what," Thiers says. "She'll be alert and creative on the job, which will keep your kids safe and entertained — what more could you ask for?"

KNOW WHAT TO ASK

Interviewing a potential babysitter can feel intimidating, but remember, you are hiring her. Treat the interview as you would a job interview. Sittercity.com offers a list of questions on its website. Here are some:

- What is it that you like about babysitting?
- What do you look for in an employer/family?
- What is your hourly rate?
- Have you ever been arrested or convicted of a felony?
- Are you okay if a job runs later than planned?
- Do you know First Aid and CPR?

KNOW WHAT TO PAY

Teenage sitters typically have less childcare experience and charge a lower hourly rate than college students, but hourly rates can vary greatly, from \$5 to \$25 per hour. The national average is \$12.75.

"We strongly recommend you pay at least minimum wage," says Bugbee. "But the best way to figure out what people are paying in your neighborhood is to use the Babysitter Calculator [on our site], which can tell you what the going rate in your area is - based on how many children you have."

KNOW WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU'RE GONE

How can you evaluate your sitter? You can always install a Nanny Cam, but you can also ask or look for signs from your children. Sittercity.com offers clients a three-step monitoring system: assess, communicate and observe.

First, assess. As soon as your sitter enters your home, pay attention to her relationship with your children. With a

child too young to talk, look for nonverbal cues. If he is excited and all smiles, she's doing a great job. If your children are becoming excessively clingy or aggressive, it could be a warning sign of mistreatment.

Next, communicate. Touch base with the sitter for a quick five minutes after each job. Ask her job-specific questions such as, "How was my child today?" and "Were there any problems today?" Also, talk to your child, asking open-ended questions such as "What was the favorite part of your day?" and "Did anything make you sad or worry you today?"

Finally, observe. Drop by home unannounced to see the sitter in action. You can also ask your neighbor to keep an eye and an ear open while you're gone. ♥

Stephanie Vozza has been a writer for more than 20 years and has contributed articles to *American Profile*, *Hybrid Mom*, *Boys' Life*, *Carolina Parenting*, *Houston Family* and *Arizona Parenting*. She is the author of *The Five-Minute Mom's Club: 105 Tips to Make a Mom's Life Easier*. Visit her website at www.stephanievozza.com





How to Prevent STRETCH MARKS

by Laura Tarbell

When I came into the fifth month of my twin pregnancy and people started to comment on how much I was growing, there were a few things that started worrying me. The first... how in the world is this going to work!? They are coming soon! YIKES! The second... stretch marks. I talked to a lot of women who got stretch marks during their second pregnancy. I know it is much harder to eat healthy and find the time to exercise while caring for another child, or two! I wasn't really worried about losing the baby weight, but stretch

marks don't go away, and that made me nervous.

I decided to research possible ways to prevent stretch marks and really focus on those during the last 3-4 months of pregnancy. Not all pregnant women get stretch marks, so there has to be something more to it than just being pregnant. First, here is some technical information to give you to have a better understanding of stretch marks related to pregnancy.

WHAT ARE STRETCH MARKS?

Stretch marks, or striae, are a consequence of stretching skin, especially repeated stretching of the skin. Statistically, stretch marks affect between 70% and 90% of pregnant women. They are said to be the result of disrupted hormones and nutrient deficiencies. However, nature designed us well. So hopefully, as long as we follow nature's prescription, stretch marks won't leave their mark. Hopefully!

Stretch marks form on the dermis layer of the skin, located just underneath the outer layer called the epidermis. When the skin stretches, the connective tissues in the dermis layer can become compromised leading to blood vessel dilation (these are the early stage red or purplish lines). Later, as the body tries to heal itself from these breaks, cells begin to divide to fill in the gap. If the damage is deep enough, the cells produce a scar to heal the *wound*. In the case of stretch marks, melanin production ceases and the skin is left with white hypopigmented scars.

CAUSES OF STRETCH MARKS

Stretch marks are caused by a degradation of the connective tis-

sue of the dermal layer of the skin. Stretching, combined with other factors which weaken this layer, causes the scars we refer to as stretch marks.

Stretching alone, however, is not enough to cause stretch marks. The skin is designed to stretch. Men and women all over the world experience skin stretching but not all experience stretch marks. The current focus of prevention is on hormones and collagen

COLLAGEN

Collagen is the most extensive structural protein in the body. Collagen and elastin make up about 90% of the skin's thickness. These fibers form an elastic weave over our entire bodies allowing the skin to be stretched substantially without compromising its integrity.

Skin is like a rubber band. As long as the rubber is in good condition, the rubber band will not show any marks from stretching, even when stretched to its limit. However, when that rubber band gets old and /or its fibers become dry, even when you stretch it just a bit, it cracks and breaks appear. The same holds true for skin. When the skin is healthy, it will stretch with no signs of having been stretched. The skin is a little more sophisticated however than a rubber band in that a rubber band's elasticity has a limit. A rubber band will never be able to stretch further than it was designed to stretch. The skin on the other hand can make new collagen to strengthen its connective tissues, enabling it to stretch more and more over time. The skin can do this as long as it has the building blocks it needs to make new elastic fibers.

Under certain conditions such as a hormone imbalance from pregnancy and nutritional deficiencies, the body may not produce sufficient amounts of collagen



and elastin. Like a rubber band, when these protein fibers are not reinforced to withstand the rapid and extensive stretching, the connective tissues break apart from the bottom up, tearing the skin and leaving a scar.

PREVENTION OF STRETCH MARKS

Hydration from the inside and outside

Everyone knows it is important to keep the skin moisturized. Topically, www.Americanpregnancy.com recommends using **Bio Oil** on the skin twice a day. My fitness coaches recommend coconut oil (both applied topically and taken internally). I am rotating these two products three times a day. With twins, I want to be extra careful! I've also read about the benefits of **olive oil** as it contains a substance called squalene, which is a chemical similar to sebum that acts as a softener and an antioxidant.

What I think is super important, and most often underestimated, is the power of hydration from the inside. Since stretch marks do not occur on the outer layer of skin, but on the second, underlying layer, what we put into our bodies could be almost more important than what we put on our bodies. It is recommended that we drink six to eight eight-ounce glasses of **water** every day. I, however, am drinking at least 3 liters a day, striving for 4. And coffee, tea and caffeinated soda do not count! Caffeine is a diuretic, which means it makes you urinate, causing you to lose hydration. Again, this can make the skin less elastic and dry (think of that old rubber band!).

Source: Stretchmarkinstitute.com

NUTRITION

PROLINE AND LYSINE – Collagen fibers themselves are made from protein, particularly **hydroxylysine** and **hydroxyproline**. Hence, eating foods high in lysine and proline may be beneficial for collagen production, although there have not been studies to confirm this theory. These are primarily found in **animal protein**. **Egg whites** are particularly high in proline.

VITAMIN C – In order for the body to synthesize protein, it needs vitamin C. Vitamin C is mainly found in all **citrus fruits** and in **red peppers, among many other fruits and vegetables**.

PHYTONUTRIENTS – Other nutrients which promote healthy collagen are the phytonutrients catechins and anthocyanidins. Catechins help prevent the breakdown of collagen while anthocyanidins help the fibers link together. **Green tea** is high in catechins and deeply pigmented fruits such as **cherries and blueberries** are high in anthocyanidins.

ZINC – Zinc works with proteins in the body to regenerate tissue by increasing the synthesis of new collagen. It is essential for connective tissue health. The best food source of zinc is **oysters but other sources include chicken, beans, nuts, and other lean meat**.

EFA'S AND OTHER FAT – Essential Fatty Acids, or EFA's, reduce inflammation. As the skin stretches, it is stressed. Keeping the skin pliable and reducing inflammation both prevent stretch marks. Sources of EFA's include **tuna, salmon and sardines (wild only, not farmed), fish oils (cod liver oil), flax and chia seed (if you buy pre-ground it is often rancid- buy whole and grind yourself), wheat germ, nuts and nut oils (walnuts are the best), and leafy greens (plus spinach)**. Dietary fat plays a big role in the integrity of every cell. Fats carry the important skin nutrients vitamins A, D, and E. Saturated fats provide the building blocks for hormones. They are also important for mineral absorption. These fats are found in **animal proteins**.

VITAMIN A – The application of vitamin A to the skin has been found to increase collagen synthesis. Eating Vitamin A is essential for the repair of skin tissue. Foods high in vitamin A include **carrots and sweet potatoes**, among other orange veggies.

VITAMIN E – Vitamin E strengthens the skin's elasticity. Foods rich in E are **blueberries, avocados, mangoes, leafy green vegetables, nuts, and certain oils**.

B VITAMINS – Biotin is a building block of skin cells. **Eggs, bananas, and rice** are such foods. Niacin is a B vitamin that enables the skin to keep moisture. **Poultry, fish, beef, nuts and seeds** are high in niacin.

COPPER – Copper helps produce elastin. **Cashews, brazil nuts, poppy and sunflower seeds** are excellent sources of copper. So are **cereal, meats and fish**.

Circulation

There are many natural remedies to improve circulation. Some helpful herbs and habits include:

- Exercise
- Massage
- Dry skin brushing
- Herbs such as Ginkgo Biloba and calendula
- **Cayenne pepper, ginger, and garlic**
- Avoid cigarettes which impairs blood flow
- Eliminate food allergies to improve nutrient absorption

*Source ThePrimalParent.com

Bottom Line:

In the fight to maintain my skin's beauty, water and all the right nutrients are essential. The answer seems to be simple: internal moisturizing is just as important as any topical oil or cream. There are so many healthy foods to eat in the list above that I don't think I have room for any junk!

Stretch marks form from the inside out. Remember, you are what you eat!! Hydrate and nourish the body with water and whole foods. Get rid of junk foods and dehydrating liquids. But easier said than done. It is often hard to say no to little goodies and treats, especially when everyone says, "C'mon you're pregnant!" But in the end, beautiful skin is worth it. ♥

Laura Tarbell is a certified AFPA personal trainer and STOTT Pilates advanced instructor and is the proud mother of two sets of twins! Learn more about Laura by visiting: www.TarbellPilates.com and www.FitLifeTwinsTwice.com.





Bringing Home BABIES

by Karen M. Trevor

You've been planning this for months. You've gone through labor and delivery, agreed on names, pinched yourself to make sure it's all really happening, and now the only thing left is a huge dose of reality: bringing home those babies! The practical moment-to-moment details can be overwhelming.

- Attending to the basic baby functions of eating, sleeping, and crying;
- Managing your house;
- Feeding your relationship;
- Working.

Rest assured that, as you take care of your helpless, demanding infants, your lives are about to be completely overhauled. And remember: this is a wonderful thing!

Karen M. Trevor, former elementary school teacher, lives in Downers Grove, Illinois, with her five children, including 2-year-old twins.

In her book, *Having Twins*, Elizabeth Noble discussed the hardships of caring for two when you get home. She believes that postpartum depression is greater for mothers of twins, and 76% of twins' mothers reported being constantly exhausted. Ongoing fatigue and sleep deprivation can prolong the depression.

To be better able to handle this rough period, you need to recognize what you are up against, get help, and establish a routine.

Initially, many people will offer their assistance. Be sure to take them up on it, but try to make it on your terms. Free help is best, but you may want to consider a mother's helper or even a part-time arrangement. Many new moms stubbornly resist accepting help; Elizabeth Friedrich and Cherry Rowland in *The Parent's Guide to Raising Twins* say it is because they want to prove they can cope without it. But, in the long run, denying your limitations and trying to be supermom burns you out quickly.

FEEDINGS TAKE FOREVER

Feeding my babies seemed to take up the bulk of my day. At 20 minutes of feeding per baby, repeated by about every three hours, you'll begin to understand why. While breastfeeding is encouraged and has met with a great many successes, I chose to bottle feed. I used the more convenient (albeit more expensive) ready-to-feed formula the first few weeks. Prepare at least six bottles per baby every evening so there is always one handy during the next day. Ask your pediatrician or the hospital nursery if the babies were using preemie nipples, which require less sucking effort and make feeding easier.

Bottle feeding enabled me to enlist help from others, especially dad at those night-time feedings. My husband and I would "claim a baby" every evening before we went to sleep.

We quickly learned to recognize each baby's cry. If "your" baby woke up, you fed her. If "his" baby awakened, you nudged your husband, said a quick "thank you," and rolled over until it was your turn. This system seemed to work well for us because the babies would eat at different times, so one person was not constantly sleepless.

Keeping the 3 am feedings as fast as possible was essential. We kept the lights dim, spoke softly, and cuddled them back to sleep. My babies initially slept in drawstring nightgowns for easy changes, too. And, when possible, we changed them before the feeding so as not to disturb their full-tummy slumber. The procedures helped set the night-time routine apart from the day-time feedings, which involved a lot more interaction and stimulation.

When on your own with two crying, hungry babies, a pacifier may help one for a while so you can feed the other.

The squeaky wheel theory applies here, with the noisiest one often getting fed first. You can also feed two at once by putting them both in bouncy chairs or swing seats, facing you. Inevitably, while I was burping one, the other would spit up before I could get her burped.

Keep cloth diapers or other types of shoulder rags in several rooms of the house.

Also, be sure to keep a record of which baby ate how much and at what time. You'll need to know how much they are eating and when to expect the next feeding. You will think you'll remember this, but you won't. Write it down.



SLEEP? A LEARNED SKILL

For the first six weeks, my daughters slept in bassinets in our room. Borrow them if you can because the babies don't use them for long. While having the babies nearby in bassinets was comforting for us because we could hear them softly breathing, it also tended to make me a light sleeper. I awoke at every gurgle and snore.

When we moved them to their own room down the hall, I kept a monitor in my room for a while, ready to bolt to their side at the slightest provocation. But it turned out there was no problem hearing those 3 am wails, and after giving up the monitor, we tended to get some much-needed sleep in between the crying.

I put the girls in separate cribs on opposite sides of the room, although many people recommend putting them in the same crib to provide some of the ongoing intimacy of the womb experience. Others recommend separate rooms to establish a sleeping experience! One baby tended to wake the other. We always tried to whisk the noisy one out before her sister awakened, with limited success. I also would move a bassinet downstairs or use a layette swing for daytime naps. I tried to use the crib mainly for night-time sleep, hoping to set it apart from naps, as well as for letting them get used to the not-so-quiet of the household by being downstairs most of the day.

After a few weeks, the babies' increased awake time gave us the opportunity to establish more routines. Routines tend to give you a bit of control amid all the chaos and get you through the basics. I would try to feed the girls one after the other; then play for a while, stimulating them with mobiles, rattles, or stuffed toys to look at, and then keep them awake for lengthening times during the day. I found a baby swing to be essential, and would hang toys from them to swat or look at. My daytime activity patterns started to take shape when they were seven to eight weeks old, and settled into routines towards three months.

BE READY FOR WAILS

Noble notes that a chorus of wailing babies is much rougher on the nerves than that of a solo infant... what an understatement!

When both babies are crying and it's not a feeding issue, there are a few comforting techniques. You can hold one on each shoulder, although it takes some getting used to and won't work if they start thrashing about. You can lay them across your lap, one on each thigh, facing up so they can see your face and hear your comforting voice. Or you can put one in a Snuggli device and hold the other, or use two Snuggli's criss-crossed on your chest.

Anticipating your babies' needs helps to cut down on crying time, too. Have that bottle ready to go when you know they're about to awaken. A change of scenery also seems to help everyone. Go for a car ride or walk. Especially with a colicky baby, take any break you can get, if only for your own sanity. In extremely desperate situations, it's perfectly all right to close the door and take a breather. You'll be much better able to calm them when you yourself are calm. I recall struggling to get the girls into snowsuits and car seats while howling the whole time, fastening them in the van, closing the door and just standing in the garage breathing deeply as I gathered my wits.

GETTING OTHER WORK DONE

The wonderful adage "sleep when the babies sleep" sounds great, but isn't completely practical. I found it difficult to relax, as exhausted as I was, when I knew the floor was sticky, the laundry piled up, or the bills needed paying. Instead, I would whip through the house like a maniac during nap times. My aim: de-clutter the place. Making it sparkling clean often was not possible. With this done, I found it easier to get the most from a 30-minute catnap.

The amount of laundry will be overwhelming. Accept a lot of hand-me-downs for extras, and plan on doing at least a load of baby clothes every day. Kids are good helpers at folding baby t-shirts and jammies, so delegate this job if you can. I also found cheap cleaning help twice a month temporarily for a more thorough toilet-bowl-and-tub-scouring cleaning. Shower and dress every morning, you will need the psychological boost it will give you.

And make your bed. With an exhausting day behind you, crawling into a made bed may be the greatest domestic accomplishment of the day. Take what you can get!

Most importantly, seize all the opportunities for bonding, playing with and getting to know your new ones. Do not hurry through the activities. Always talk to the babies. Make eye contact as often as you can. Lay them on a blanket together while you talk to each of them. Touch them. Make play and enjoyment the priority of your day. Let the vacuuming wait.

FINAL WORDS OF WISDOM

Rely on your instincts and trust yourself. You can do this. The hectic, constant pace of the first few weeks will slow down, and you will adjust. You really will look back on this time and wonder how you got through it, and you'll feel good knowing you did it and did it well. ♥





6 STEPS TO



by Mary Billiter Thomas

YOUR PAIR

Potty training... Now or later? My husband and I agreed to delay answering that dreaded question until we heard from the experts. Marriage and family therapist Nonie Bradley and certified parent educator Sherry Ittner, parents themselves, team-teach parenting classes in Southern California, including one on potty training, which they break down into six helpful steps. And with potty training, as with much in the lives of twins, it's two steps forward and one step back.

Mary Billiter Thomas lives in Oceanside, California with her husband and identical twin boys.

1 Readiness

Each child is unique in this process. "A key element," Ittner says, "is bladder control: Is your child having longer intervals between diaper changes?" Typically, girls show readiness between the ages of 2 and 2 ½ and boys by the age of 3. That was the experience for Diane Aiken, of Encinitas, California, mother of boy/girl twins. "My daughter had bladder

control right away." Aiken says, "But my son is taking a little longer." While the readiness of your child is primary, parental readiness should not be overlooked. Aiken agrees, "One morning I woke up and decided I was ready to start the potty training process and we began."

Bradley stressed the importance to parents of "owning their feelings" towards potty training because children are highly intuitive and often reflect their parents' feelings. "Get real clear on your attitudes before starting the next step, preparing," Bradley cautions.

2 Preparing

The preparing stage can start as early as 18-months because you are simply introducing the idea of using a potty. Shop around and purchase a potty but, as Ittner suggests, "Introduce the potty gradually by letting your child explore. Ask them if they want to sit on the potty, but if they say 'no', quit. You and your child are still becoming comfortable with the idea and preparing for the next phase.

"At 18-months, a child learns through observation and imitating others, so parents and siblings are encouraged to model the behavior," Ittner explains.

"Blake and Brent were much more interested in standing and going potty like their big brother than using the smaller potty," says Shawn Homan, mother of fraternal twin boys in Oceanside, California.

Signs that your twins are ready...

**from the American Academy of Pediatrics

- Your twins stay dry at least two hours at a stretch or are dry after a nap.
- Bowel movements are regular and predictable.
- Facial expressions offer clues.
- Your twins can follow simple instructions.
- Your twins can help undress themselves.
- Your twins are uncomfortable with dirty or wet diapers.
- Your twins ask to see the potty or wear underpants.



Twins can also model behavior for each other. They see their twin use the potty and don't want to be left out, so they try, too. "The time involved in potty training twins," Homan admits, "wasn't cut in half, but it was much easier."

3 Step By Step

Even after preparing the groundwork, parents tend to fall into the trap of questioning their children. "Do you want to stop wearing diapers?" Instead, Joanna Cole, in her book *Parents Book of Toilet Teaching*, advocates making positive statements such as, "We think you are ready to stop wearing diapers and start using the potty."

As with preparing your children and letting them explore the potty, underpants should also be gradually introduced. It is important not to rush the process. Set a date with your children and make positive statements. Tell them: "We are going to go shopping for some new underpants."

"Include your child," Cole recommends. "Let them select their underpants." Also, be sure to buy underpants that are big enough to pull up and down easily. Your twins will need about a dozen pairs each—in preparation for accidents.

After your twins select their underpants, don't hide the new pants in a drawer. Let your twins admire themselves in the mirror with their new underpants.

Kelly O'Connell of Seal Beach, California, recalls: "It was a big deal going to buy big boy underpants and big girl panties for my triplets." O'Connell laughs as she recalls, "The excitement didn't end at the store—they showed them off to everyone!"

Next, lead them to the potty. Use a positive statement, such as "Remember, you're not wearing diapers now, so you'll have to use the potty."

As we discussed, however, you can lead a child to the potty but you can't make him go. Bradley recommends that parents relax and not panic. Be ready for accidents and remind your child of the potty for the "next time."

4 Night Dryness

"Night dryness" develops later in most children because they are still working on control during the day. Until your child has fewer daytime accidents and has developed greater bladder control, use a diaper for naptime and during the night.

Eventually, when your child is ready for a diaper-free night, prepare yourself. Double-sheet the bed, avoid any drinks for your child one hour prior to bedtime and leave the potty in an accessible area.

5 Learning Period

Potty training can be frustrating for parents because they are learning new techniques to teach their child, according to Bradley and Ittner. From showing them how to pull down pants to friendly reminders like, "Let's go potty." Potty training is an entirely new arena for most parents. Accordingly, Bradley advises that accidents will happen, with minor setbacks and periods of regression for the child and parent.

6 Parental Attitudes and Behaviors

Bradley and Ittner stress the acceptance of feelings. "Frustration or perfectionism," Bradley says, "are feelings you wouldn't want to transmit to your child."

Parents and children are learning and developing new skills with each other. Bradley reminds everyone, "Be gentle with yourself and your child."

Whether the topic is positive discipline or potty training, Bradley and Ittner encourage "firm and kind" parenting. "Be kind out of respect for our children and firm out of respect for ourselves," Bradley explains.

When a problem arises between parents on the "how-to-potty" approach, Bradley encourages parents to privately discuss the matter away from the children. One approach is to use a code word that signals to your partner the need to talk. One couple in one of their potty training classes offered their code word of "Bob" which stood for "Back off Buddy," when a potty training issue arose.

Most of the couples reported that jointly they form the "firm and kind" parenting approach, but individually each parent tended to be closer to one spectrum than sharing both characteristics. While one tended to be firm, the other leaned towards being kind.

Bradley acknowledged the gifts both types of parenting offer. A "firm" parent brings the gift of structure and boundaries and a "kind" parent bring the gift of love and patience. Children need both these gifts. "Create the balance of structure and boundaries, within an atmosphere of love and patience, and the children will thrive," Bradley stated.

Since attending this class, my husband and I have been able to turn the question, "Potty train now or potty train later? Into a positive statement... "We think now is the time and, in the team approach to potty training, unity works." ♥





PRESCHOOL

YES They Can Learn to Care

by Patricia Edmister, Ph.D.

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

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

When 3 1/2-year-old Donald was playing with his truck in the sandbox with his twin brother

David and the wheels came off, causing Donald to cry, David offered Donald his truck to help move the sand, saying, "Don't be sad—this will work, and maybe mom can fix the wheels."

Sometimes adults are surprised when children this young or even younger display such empathic behavior toward other children or adults. Research at the National Institute of Mental Health and at various universities, has

shown, however, that babies as young as 12 months often demonstrate extremely compassionate, generous behavior. Their parents' example—behaving in an empathic, caring way—was found to be the greatest influence on the children's behaviors.

HOW EMPATHIC BEHAVIOR DEVELOPS

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

person feels when that person is sad

or hurt or tired, the child is better able to understand how his actions can help the other feel better.

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

Being a twin increases the potential for the early development of empathic behavior, since the children have a "built-in" friend of the same age with whom a relationship can be established and behavior practiced and rewarded. In addition, the children potentially are exposed to a greater amount of positive parental modeling of empathic behavior (with the same-age sibling).

Since more opportunities will arise due to the presence of the additional same-age child. This, then, provides additional



positive reinforcement of empathic skill demonstration.

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

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

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

Stages of Empathy

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

7 Steps to Teaching Empathy

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

Can Children be too empathic?

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

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

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



Meet "THE CUTEKID™ CUTEST TWINS OF 2012"

by Christa D. Reed



FRATERNAL TWIN GIRLS ~ CeCe and Elle ~

Congratulations to "The CuteKid™ Cutest Twins of 2012" Celia Claire ("CeCe") and Heidi Emanuelle (Elle)! They are 4-years-old and live in Harrisburg, Illinois with their parents Ashleigh and Ryan and little brother John Parker. These adorable girls were just recently named as overall winners in 2012 for the annual online photo competition. Each month a panel of professional talent and casting agents specializing in twins/multiples reviews the submitted photos and selects a monthly winner and from the 12 monthly winners they select an overall winner for the year.

"We were absolutely thrilled the girls won the contest," says proud mom Ashleigh. "The prize money is a great start to their college education because the costs of higher education for twins is so expensive and this will be a great start for their

future...plus, we are so honored our girls will be featured on the cover of TWINS Magazine!"

Ashleigh entered her twin girls into the twins photo contest as an after-thought and never actually thought they would be selected as the "August" monthly winners let alone being named the title of "The CuteKid™ Cutest Twins of 2012".

Their Twin Story

Ashleigh and her husband Ryan went through invitro fertilization treatments after several years of trying to conceive, and when finally learning they were pregnant with twins, they felt extremely blessed to be pregnant and were thrilled to break the news to family and friends!

"I remember calling each family member after our first ultrasound at 6-weeks gestation," says Ashleigh. "We told them that our baby had a great heartbeat... and so did our other one! Everyone would sit there for a second and then say...wait, do you mean there are two???"

After going into preterm labor at just 24 weeks gestation, Ashleigh had to stay in the hospital for six weeks before giving birth to the girls at just 30 weeks gestation and weighing in at 2 lbs. 11 oz (CeCe) and 3 lbs. 4 oz. (Elle). They had to stay in the N.I.C.U. for two



months before coming home and when looking at them now, mom is amazed how far they have come in just four short years...

About CeCe & Elle

Mom tells us that the twins are best friends and unlike most siblings, she notices that they always want to be together and attributes this to their twin bond! When describing each daughter, mom sees Elle as the "mastermind" and CeCe as the "do-er"!

They both enjoy taking dance lessons and love to play with make-up. Elle loves to go hunting with her daddy, but she is also more "girly" of the two. She has already been deer, raccoon, dove, and squirrel hunting...all at the ripe age of four!



They also both enjoy reading books with mom before bedtime and they are big fans of Fancy Nancy and Pinkalicious. Other activities they love is watching movies, drinking hot chocolate, and spending the night with their Mimi and Papa, cousins and also of course they both love taking care of their little brother as well.

On Raising Twins

Ashleigh says the very best thing about having twins is getting to witness the twin connection that is different between non twin siblings. "They truly desire to always be together, even though they sometimes argue! I feel blessed to witness their special twin relationship!"

On the other hand, she remembers a very challenging stage for them started at the age of 17-months until they were about 2 1/2. "We just couldn't take them anywhere," says Ashleigh. "They had zero patience for restaurants and high chairs. I can't count how many restaurants we would ask for our check as soon as we got our drinks. They wanted down to walk and if

they couldn't they would scream! Talk about breaking out in an instant sweat!"

When out in public mom explains that they get really positive comments on the way they interact with each other. "Although they get into minor disagreements, they generally really watch out for each other and take care of each other. It's nice for me to hear people in social play group settings remark about how sweet they are to each other." ♥



Here were the CUTEKID™ CUTEST TWINS MONTHLY WINNERS IN 2012



How to enter the "CuteKid™ 2013 Cutest Twins/Multiples Contest":

First go to <http://www.twinsmagazine.com/main-menu/CuteKidContest> to learn more about how to enter and click on that link to take you directly to the twins/multiples photo contest registration page.

The CuteKid™ offers twins/multiples the following:

- A Fun Place to Share & Store Photos
- Exposure to National Talent & Casting Agents
- Chance to be Selected for Prizes
- Discount and Special Offers
- Free Gifts from CuteKid™ Sponsors
- Share in the CuteKid™ Community

by Melinda Rhodes

THAT'S HOW WE ROLL

Buying Advice for Double Jogging Strollers

When my husband and I found out we were expecting twins, we made a decision to maintain our active lifestyle and include our twins in as much of it as possible. We planned to take them jogging, hiking and even snowshoeing with us! By immersing them in outdoor activities such as these at an early age, we hoped that they would be inspired by our example to stay physically fit and also learn to appreciate nature. So in addition to shopping for cribs, car seats, high chairs and everything else in twos, I began shopping for double jogging strollers.

I immediately set my sights on the BOB Revolution Duallie. The BOB seemed to be the most popular brand of jogging stroller and was carried at all of our local sporting goods stores. The salespeople recommended it and a few other people I knew sung the praises of the single Revolution. What I quickly learned, however, was that as with many things in life—especially high school—the most popular does not always equal the best in class. This is not to say that the BOB Revolution Duallie is not a good stroller; it is lightweight, maneuverable and boasts some very convenient features including a cup holder deep enough to hold a water bottle without tipping over. But it was missing a few of my own personal must-have features such as a hand brake and an adjustable handle. Furthermore, the padded handlebar was comfortable but it was made of foam which I knew would not hold up as well as rubberized handles. With a price tag in the \$500 range, I expected more from a stroller. So I continued to do my research and weighed features against prices.

FEATURES

There are certain features that any jogging stroller should have for it to be safe and comfortable to use.



- Lightweight, yet sturdy frame
- Five-point harness system
- Foot brake
- Hand brake or wrist strap for downhill jogging
- Sun shades
- Pneumatic tires

Additional features that are nice to have but not necessarily must-haves include:

- Adjustable handle
- Speaker system
- Reclining seats
- Parent cup holders
- Child snack trays/cup holders
- Storage pockets
- Rain cover

Ultimately, the brand of jogging stroller you buy will depend on your lifestyle: how often you will use it, the climate you live in, the terrain you will be jogging on, and whether or not you will be using it for activities other than jogging. Make a list of the features that are most important to you and stick to that list when you are shopping for strollers. If you buy a stroller that doesn't fit your needs or is hard for you to maneuver, you aren't going to use it.

Despite the vast array of information available on the internet, it is also a good idea to test the strollers you are considering first hand

before making a purchase. Do your research, bring your kids to the store with you and take the stroller for a test drive. Their opinion is just as important!

That being said, here are my recommendations for a few of the best double jogging strollers to fit the varying needs of parents of multiples.

MOST ECONOMICAL

One of the most ridiculous things people say to me when they find out I am a mother of twins is, "Two for the price of one!" Any parent of multiples can tell you there is nothing further from the truth. The hospital didn't offer any BOGO discounts on medical services or supplies and twin infants definitely require twice as many diapers. When faced with all of the expenses that come with having twins I decided it would be in my family's best financial interest to limit my choice to something budget-friendly.

With a price tag just over \$100, the BeBeLove USA EVO DS Jogging Stroller fit that bill perfectly. It had many of the must-have features I was looking for including a hand brake, multiple seat positions, five-point harnesses and a retractable canopy. The EVO DS also boasts a large storage compartment underneath the seats that can hold just about anything. The 16" pneumatic tires were fixed, which did make it harder to turn corners. I primarily used it on a parkway, however, with very few bends. Having the front wheel in a fixed position actually made it safer for that particular use. The large, air-cushioned tires offered a very comfortable ride and even handled the ups and downs of the dirt hills on the BMX course adjacent to the parkway. (When it wasn't in use, my husband sometimes finished our jog with a ride on those hills, the kids squealing with delight all the while!)

The biggest drawback to the EVO DS is the weight. At 45 pounds, it is one of the heaviest double jogging strollers on the market. This isn't as noticeable when you are pushing it, but it certainly is when you are lifting it in and out of your car. It also has a fairly large footprint when folded which could be a problem for some people. I could easily fit it in the back of our SUV, but it would not fit in the trunk of our car without removing the front wheel.

MOST VERSATILE

Suddenly, my stroller needs changed as I became pregnant with baby number three. So I set out in search of a (gulp) triple jogging stroller! Three kids under the age of three necessitated such a beast; fortunately, the stroller I found was anything but! Weighing in at a mere 33 pounds the Valco Tri Mode Twin EX Double Stroller, complete with an optional third "joey" jump seat, is sleek, sporty and loaded with features. It has an adjustable handlebar which makes it comfortable for parents of multiple heights to use. The 12" pneumatic tires could be locked into place or allowed to swivel 45 degrees, making it a breeze to turn corners. Each seat had its own retractable canopy, which seems like a minor detail but was actually a big deal; it kept my twins from fighting over whether or not they wanted to be in the sun or not. Each canopy also has a peek-a-boo window which allowed me to easily see who had fallen asleep.

There are a variety of additional options available for the Valco Tri Mode Twin EX Stroller, which is what makes it so versatile. The joey seat can be purchased converting it into a triple jogging stroller. A

hitchhiker shelf can also be attached to the back, allowing you to transport 4 children at the same time. While you wouldn't want to jog with a child standing on the hitchhiker, it works well for a quick trip to the mall or an extended vacation in Disneyland.


Such versatility comes with a price. You can expect to pay around \$700 for the Tri Mode Twin; more depending on what additional accessories you choose. Also, I had to sacrifice one of my must-have features on this stroller: the hand brake. When I used it in my neighborhood rather than on the parkway, I simply reversed my route and jogged (okay...trudged!) up the hill instead of letting the stroller pull me down the hill faster than my legs could go. Another drawback is the under seat storage capacity. It is divided into two sections, making it hard to stow larger items. There are plenty of other compartments, however, including zippered pockets on the seat backs that allow you to organize and transport all of the necessities you need for two or more kids.

BEST ALL-AROUND

Now that my twins are in school, I once again needed another jogging stroller to fit my ever changing needs. Consumer Reports officially recommended the Schwinn Free Runner as their top pick in October 2012. It was the best all-around for maneuverability and ease of use. This particular model has since been discontinued by the company, but the Schwinn Arrow Fixed Wheel Double Jogging Stroller which retails for around \$250 is essentially the new and improved version of the Free Runner. Although I was shopping for its single stroller counterpart, I still compared the double model to other double strollers and was impressed. It is a featherweight at just 25 pounds! It boasts 16" pneumatic tires, a hand-brake, adjustable handle and dual cup holders. One of the new features on the Arrow is built in MP3 speakers. Parents can listen to music while jogging and still be able to hear their little ones' comments. The music will also entertain the kids at the same time.

According to multiple customer reviews, the sound quality of the speakers is not the greatest, but that is to be expected. Also, a few people complained that the seat backs could be a little higher to accommodate taller children.

FINAL ADVICE

Whatever type of jogging stroller you prefer, you can often save a substantial amount of money by searching online classifieds for a pre-owned model. As with the purchase of any type of baby gear, you should be careful when buying a jogging stroller second hand—even the top brands have been subject to recalls for various reasons. Ask the seller for the exact model number and manufacturing date and check that information on the Consumer Protection Safety website (www.cpsc.gov). 



Melinda Rhodes is a freelance writer in Ogden, Utah. She is the mother of 5-year-old fraternal twins and a 3-year-old singleton.

A SECRET CODE WHEN PARENTING TWINS

by Karen Whitehair

I held her in my shaking hands and stared at her, one of my daughters, just over four pounds and hours old. Her head was so small I feared I might crush it as I tried to feed her the one

Karen Whitehair

works at a historic museum in Maryland where she lives with her husband and 7-year-old twin girls.

ounce of milk that would give her the nourishment she needed to grow. One ounce, I could not believe such a small amount could matter so much. I relaxed only a little. Alarms and lights flashed all around us in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) like New York City on a bad crime night. I jumped with every alarm thinking I or my husband had broken one of our precious, fragile babies.

I had thought I was prepared for this. I had asked questions of my mom and friends with children who gave me bland, unhelpful responses. I had helped my mom take care of my little sister, ten years my junior. I even had worked as a nanny one summer in Connecticut where I had taken care of three young girls—ages eight months, two years, and six years. So I thought I knew what

I was getting into. I thought I would be able to juggle twins with ease.

I had no clue. Nothing really prepares you for this, becoming a parent, much less a parent of twins. I suspect each woman goes through her own joyful, yet terrifying, awe-inspiring transition into motherhood. Mine was just multiplied. I had two beautiful little beings, dolls incarnate, for which I was suddenly responsible. I was a mother of twins and scared out of my mind.

After ten days in the NICU, the nurse came up to us and said we could take them home. Having adjusted to the routine of coming in every day and sleeping well at night knowing that there were trained professionals caring for our daughters, my husband and I froze at the news, staring at the nurse in disbelief.

We turned to look at each other, both knowing what the other was thinking—we were not ready. We were sure we would break them if we took them home. The nurse insisted we were ready.

We managed to get them home with me sitting in between their car seats. My stomach felt like a rock. My head swam. My husband looked like I felt. That night we gingerly put our babies to bed in the same crib—they were that small. Both my husband and I retired exhausted, nervous. We did not sleep well that night. Every rustle of the blankets; every murmur of their teeny voices; every creak in the house woke us and sent us hurtling into the babies' room thinking one had stopped breathing or was hungry or needed to be changed.

The next morning, absolutely exhausted, we picked up my mother at the airport. She looked at us, the babies, and proclaimed that she had arrived a day late. If the truth be told, she had. She set to work getting us straightened out, a gift for which in retrospect we are truly grateful. We became a well-oiled machine, albeit a half-asleep one.

We remained scared, but as we began to venture out into the world again with our girls, we started to realize we were doing just fine. With each encounter in the outside world, we gained confidence. Sometimes, we saw parents with older twins. They looked at us and noted the dark circles under our eyes and our expressions of utter bewilderment. They approached cautiously and said very quickly and quietly, "It gets easier as they get older," and then keep walking before we could utter a word.

This happened to us more than once.

My husband experienced one important encounter in a grocery store. A lady approached, shocked to see him going down the aisle alone with two carts, one for each girl in their baby carrier, to do the grocery shopping. "I have twins too," she exclaimed. "So you can take them out! I'm terrified to." My husband assured her it is possible. The conversation went a bit longer, and he discovered the lady's twins were 18-months-old and were still not sleeping through the night. Our girls started sleeping longer than six hours in a stretch at five months. We felt truly blessed.

What got us through those first terrifying, overwhelming months were these unexpected encounters with people who had been through the twin experience before us. They helped us to realize we were not alone, that our feelings and experiences were completely normal. These encounters imparted important secrets that only the experienced would know such as feeding the babies together in bouncers rather than trying to feed them by bottle one at a time. Unexpected advice, almost hints really, from parents of twins often arrived to us intermittently, clandestinely, like a secret code, when we needed it most. We soon realized we were a part of a curious, yet exceptional club. It's definitely a twin thing. ♥





My Very Special BFF

by Jacqueline Kopito

The drama among the girls started when I was in the eighth grade. The worst ones were those that were the self-appointed Queen Bees who each had their own little entourage. Cliques formed, girls fought over boys, and being mean became second nature to most. Girls would change their BFF (best friend forever) every few weeks. It was a tough year. Thank goodness that I had my twin Amy!

One of the benefits of having a twin was that I didn't have to get involved in all the craziness. Amy was my one and only BFF, and she and I were a solid team. I knew she would never leave me for a new set of friends, steal my boyfriend or talk behind my back. We were loyal to each other and always had each other's back.

One typical spring day I was in the locker room changing into my shorts and t-shirt for track practice when I saw the Queen Bee (or at least she thought so) and one of her little followers joyfully destroying everything in my teammate's locker. They were busy pouring baby oil and talcum powder all over her clothes, writing nasty words with a black marker on her locker and then stole her sneakers. I was not sure about all the details, but my guess was that Queen Bee thought my teammate was stealing her boyfriend. I didn't know for sure, but nobody deserved to be tormented like this.

I didn't want to get involved, but I just had to say something. I hoped I wasn't turning into one of those drama queens? Before I knew it, I blurted out "what do you think you are doing? Leave her stuff alone!!!" Queen Bee turned around quickly, defiantly tossing her long blond hair and stared at me with a look of disbelief. Her little follower (who wore way too much blue eyeliner for my liking) jumped up and stared at me too, simultaneously dropping the sneakers. They knew they were caught in action. Now what? I was starting to break out in a sweat when Queen Bee yelled "back off", her little friend seconding her with a "Yeah!" Did she just say "back off?" Now my head was spinning, I hated confrontation, and clearly a fight was looming, What on earth was I to do? It would be two against one. If I stood up for myself and my teammate would they try to stuff me into my locker? Or what if I did nothing, would they still try to stuff me in the locker?

All of a sudden, I saw Amy walk in the locker room! Her timing was impeccable. Now it was two against two and if they tried to stuff me into my locker, Amy would save me! In her most polite voice, Amy asked Queen Bee what she was doing? Were they friends, I wondered? I knew all of Amy's friends (or so I thought), and she had never mentioned Queen Bee. They started talking calmly while I looked on in a state of shock. Amy told Queen Bee that our teammate would never steal someone else's boyfriend, besides she had her own boyfriend. The tension lifted, and before I knew it, the girls had returned the sneakers and were feverishly trying to rub the ink off the locker and shake the powder out of the clothes. Then Queen Bee apologized to me. Did I hear correctly - AN APOLOGY! What next? Was Queen Bee now going to ask us to sit at her lunch table?

As it turned out, Amy and Queen Bee had recently become friends because they were lab partners. Amy said she wasn't a bad person just a bit of a drama queen at times, as were practically all of the other girls of this age. Who would have known? It's funny because you never knew who would be your friend or enemy. Everything could change in a flash. Being a girl in the eighth grade was not easy. Most girls were not very level-headed and basically insecure. They jumped to conclusions, stole each other's boyfriends (only to find out that they really didn't want them in the first place), and were always trying to fit in. It was drama, drama, drama, and then some. It was hard not to get dragged into all the chaos. Even if you ran from it, it sometimes it still found you. Luckily, I survived the year thanks to my twin, my one and only BFF! ♥



Is There a
**Sex Life
After
Twins?**

HOW TO GET YOUR SEX GROOVE BACK

by Joshua Coleman, Ph.D.



Bob and Marcy's sex life began to deteriorate several months into the pregnancy with their twin girls. Marcy had extreme nausea throughout her pregnancy and then had to be on bed rest for the last two months.

Pull-Out—marital satisfaction drops for the majority of couples with the birth of the first child and the drop may be even greater for parents of multiples.

Bob missed the frequency of their sex life and the kind of connection that it gave him to Marcy. He reassured himself; however, that it would only be a short period of time before they could resume the sex life that they'd always enjoyed.

How wrong he was. Like many women, Marcy's sex drive didn't recover in the first year. Not only that, their marriage began to take a turn for the worse. Marcy started feeling more upset with Bob after the arrival of the twins and this, among other things, made her less interested in getting their sex life back on track. Unfortunately, this is an all-too-common scenario. Marital satisfaction drops for the majority of couples with the birth of the first child and the drop may be even greater for parents of multiples. Typically, mom's satisfaction drops first, usually within the first few months, and then dad's starts to follow a few months later.

Sex can be a scarce commodity in homes with young children, and even more scarce for parents of twins. It's common for women to experience a decrease or absence of desire while they're nursing and sometimes for months afterwards. Breastfeeding often causes the release of the hormone oxytocin, which can induce feelings of calm and pleasure. Furthermore, breastfeeding can cause problems with lubrication because it can suppress the production of estrogen and ovulation.

Mom's satisfaction drops earlier than dad's because she is recovering from childbirth and dealing with the changes in her body image and hormones, and in many homes, feeling resentful about the way all the parenting and housework have landed in her lap, despite agreements made prior to becoming parents. For some strange reason, these don't appear to be the ingredients to get women in the mood for sex. I say "strange" because stress, exhaustion and resentment don't appear to have a big influence on whether men want to have sex. Generally, they want to have it whenever they can.

And herein lies the rub for many couples: Sex is the biggest predictor of male satisfaction in marriage, but is further down the scale for most women. For women to get in the mood, it often requires that their husbands engage in more of the behaviors that are often missing from new fathers of twins—being active as partners, prioritizing the family, communicating feelings, doing housework and showing affection. Men tend to be more involved with the house and kids when their wives can be appreciative, have sex, not give too much direction about the house or children and not complain too much about them.

Women in our culture, and most others, are socialized to be care-taking and self-denying. As a result, many have a harder time being appropriately self-interested in marriage and in love-making. They worry about the well being of a partner so much

that they can't relax or be appropriately directive. While some men's sexual abilities also are affected negatively by being overly worried about hurting a partner, they are nonetheless supported by a culture that encourages and rewards their self-interest.

It wasn't that long ago that many women were far less aware of how to achieve orgasm or, even to know what aroused them. In the late '40's and '50's, the Kinsey Report caused controversy when it revealed that women were as capable of orgasm as men. Jennifer Berman, M.D., and Laura Berman, Ph.D., authors of *For Women Only* note that many women come to their clinic without a basic understanding of their sexual anatomy, or knowledge of what their genitals look like. Many suffer from the belief that they're abnormal if they can't have an orgasm during intercourse, despite the fact that only 20% to 30% of the female population can.

This is compounded by the reality that many men and women believe that men should know what to do in the sexual arena without direction. Some men feel humiliated by a wife's request for a different technique or approach because they take advice as a criticism, or complying with the request as an act of submission. In other words, rather than seeing sex as an interaction requiring approaches unique to each individual, they see it as an expression of their inadequacy as men. In addition, because men often obtain their information about sex from other men or from pornography, they're often wrong about what is exciting or gratifying to women. Sources of information such as pornography are especially problematic as they're geared to a male's sexual fantasy that typically is more graphic and orgasm-driven than women's sexual fantasies or desires.

Most couples also have irrational ideas about the quality and quantity of lovemaking that is going on in other households. Consider following facts from Barry and Emily McCarthy's book *Rekindling Desire*;

- Less than half of the sexual experiences of well-functioning couples involve equal desire, arousal and orgasm.
- One partner is typically more into sex than the other.
- 5% to 15% of sex experiences are mediocre, unsatisfying or fail
- 50% of married couples and over 60% of unmarried couples experience sexual dysfunction and dissatisfaction.
- Inhibited desire is the most common complaint.
- One out of three adult women, and one out of seven adult males experience a lack of desire.
- One partner, usually male, initiates and encourages contact.

However, there are many other reasons why sex disappears or decreases in a marriage with twins. Some common reasons are:

- Fear of being hurt
- Feelings of guilt, shame or self-criticism
- A fear of being controlled
- Alcohol or drugs
- Anger
- Depression, worry and anxiety
- Medical problems
- Stress and exhaustion. ♥

Continued on page 26

Recommended reading

For Each Other: *Sharing Sexual Intimacy* by Lonnie Barbach (Signet, 1984)

For Yourself: *The Fulfillment of Female Sexuality* by Lonnie Barbach (Anchor, 1976)

Rekindling Desire: by Barry and Emily McCarthy (Brunner-Routledge 2003)

Passionate Marriage: *Love, Sex, Intimacy in Emotionally Committed Relationships* by David Schnarch (Henry Holt, 1998)

The Sex-Starved Marriage: *A couple's guide to boosting their marriage libido*, by Wiener-Davis (Simon & Schuster, 2003)

What to do?

What to do?

Improving a sex life or getting it back on track takes communication and a willingness to be vulnerable. If your spouse has made requests that you have ignored, consider that you may be avoiding responsibility for the problems in your marriage by ignoring him or her. If you have become withdrawn and defiant as a way to express your disappointment or disapproval of your partner, you may be missing an opportunity to shift they dynamic in a more positive direction and revitalize your marriage or keep it strong.

If you decide NOT to work on it:

11 strategies to guarantee a bad sex life

- Never go out on dates
- When you do go out on dates, talk about all of the problems that exist in your partner of your relationship.
- Criticize your partner's body. Men, you'll find this especially effective if you'd like a bad sex life with your wife.
- Bring up a conflict shortly before bed. That will definitely create a mood.
- Bring up your sexual requests or complaints only during fights. Your partner will really be interested in your feelings at that point.
- Negatively compare your partner out loud to your previous spouse or partners. It's a total turn-on.
- Expect your sex life to be like it was when you were dating or when you were 18.

- Ignore or insensitively handle your partner's requests concerning what excites them.
- Have your children sleep in the same bed as you or stay up so late that sex is guaranteed not to happen.
- Don't work on communication and affection in the rest of your marriage.
- Don't prioritize your own needs because that way you're guaranteed to be too exhausted and stressed out to make love.

If you decide to work on it:

13 guidelines to great sex talk

- Begin by expressing feelings of love, admiration or appreciation for your partner.
- Ask your partner what is pleasing or displeasing to him/her as a way of putting you in the more vulnerable position first.
- Tell your partner in a loving, affectionate way, what you like or don't like in bed. Be as specific as you can.
- State your needs and wishes clearly as requests, not demands.
- Put your requests in the positive: Rather than saying, "You never want to have sex" or "You're so self-involved in bed," say, "I really like it when we make love. I'm wondering if you have any ideas about what I can do to make it more pleasurable for you."
- Write down what you think the other would like in terms of frequency. Strive to reach a compromise.
- Assume it will be awkward to talk about, even for the most experienced of couples.
- If you feel safe, tell your partner your worst fears about yourself sexually. "I worry that I don't please you," or "I worry that I'm too fat, too small."
- Raise the topic during a period of harmony.
- Make sure that the priority is addressing the issue as friends, not to engage in any particular sexual act.
- Assume that if you raise the topic of sex, other issues may also get raised.
- Expect progress to go slowly. Assume that it will take time to get it to where it once was or to where you want it to be. Don't get discouraged.
- Evaluate your inflated ideas about what sex is supposed to be like in marriage. As Winterson wrote, "Sex, in movies and magazines is often portrayed as a fiery furnace, when in real life it's more like central heating with an irregular thermostat."

Baby Gear...Beg, Borrow & SAVE!

by Maisie Knowles

According to data collected by the USDA, the average middle-income, two-parent family spends \$12,290 to \$14,320 annually on their child. In addition to housing, health care and clothing, there's no question baby gear contributes largely to that annual expense during the early years. Carriers, car seats, cribs and strollers can all add up to a big expense for first-time parents.

Happily, experienced parents know a thing or two about saving on everything from baby formula to car seats. Before you max out your credit cards in preparation for your bundle of joy, consider these tips to save on all the gear you need.

BEG

From Family and Friends

If you have friends or family with little ones, ask if you can have some of the baby gear they've grown out of. If you ask nicely enough you might score some gear for free or at a minimal cost.

From Retail Stores

It's a given to create a baby registry, however don't be afraid to add all your items to that list. Some stores like Target and Babies 'R Us will give you a coupon to use on the remaining items off your registry before your due date.

BORROW

Swap

Babies grow quickly, which means that they are also growing out of gear like car seats and strollers at an astounding rate. Instead of purchasing new items for each stage, look for groups of moms in your town who are willing to swap items with each other.

Test Drive

Ask your friends and family if you can borrow gear for a set amount of time. You may even want to ask to borrow an item for a trial run before you purchase an expensive piece of gear.

SAVE

Find Freebies

There are ways to get baby items that almost feel like stealing because you can get them for free! Find a list of free baby items like formula, nursing covers and car seat canopies at MrFreeStuff.com. Ask your pediatrician for as many free formula samples as they can spare. You'll learn that sometimes, the sample size of certain products is really all you need. For example, the free Lansinoh's sample I received from my hospital was all I used while I was nursing.

Request Hospital Giveaways

During your hospital stay ask your nurses what you can take home with you. Grab as many diapers as you can, ask for a humidifier, a nasal aspirator and maybe even a blanket! You can take these items home with you at no additional cost.

Participate in the Trade-In Event

Participate in Babies 'R Us Great Trade-In Event through Feb 10. If you don't have gear to trade in, it might be worth it to pick up an older car seat or stroller off of Craigslist to trade in for 25-percent off a new item.

Go Gender Neutral

If you plan on having more children, you may have to look at the baby gear you do purchase as an investment! Don't buy gender specific items, but rather purchase gender neutral items so that you can use your gear with future children regardless of their sex. ♥

Maisie Knowles is a working mother of two with three-year's experience writing on parenting issues and business ownership. She co-founded Kinoli Inc. with her husband in 2005 and divides her time between managing the company and taking care of her two young girls. For more information, visit MaisieKnowles.com.

Did you know that most states have local parents of multiples clubs that offer clothing exchanges, swaps and some even host HUGE children's clothing and equipment sales? These are the BEST places to go to find gently used double everything! Don't know where to find a club? Visit www.nomotc.org to find a local club in your area!

Here's another way to save some cash while providing a chemical free alternative to diaper wipes...

Make Home Made Diaper Wipes Recipe 1

You will need:

- 10 cup plastic container with a lid
- 1/2 roll of Bounty paper towels
- 2 tbls of baby oil
- 2 tbls of baby bath
- 2 cups of water

Cut roll of paper towels in half, remove center cardboard, mix liquid ingredients, pour on top of paper towels, pull first towel up. Each roll of towels makes 2 containers of wipes, which lasts aprx. 3 weeks.

Here is another recipe for wipes:

Recipe 2

No more expensive baby wipes! Here is a great recipe.

- 1-roll of Bounty paper towels cut in half & cardboard removed
- 2-cups water
- 2-Tablespoons each baby bath and lotion
- 1-plastic bowl (about 6 cup capacity-with lid)

Bring water to boil and add baby bath and lotion. place one half of paper towel roll into plastic container, and pour solution over paper towels. Once cool, pull your "wipes" from the center of the roll. keep sealed when not in use to prevent evaporation.

Grandparents of Twins

Defining their New Role &
Finding Different Ways they can help!

by Steven Jeffries



Grandparents also benefit from helping to care for twin babies. Photo by Lisa Jeffries

Most grandparents, or soon to be ones, are excited and thrilled at the announcement of a new grandchild, and that certainly goes **double** for twins. Parents will soon realize the adventure and challenge they are about to engage in while raising twins, but sometimes grandparents take longer to understand how different it will be. There may already be a generation gap when it comes to parenting, and this can be a source of tension for many extended families. What grandparents of twins and multiples will hopefully come to learn is that they can play an even more vital role in their children's and grandchildren's lives - not just as "the spoilers" - but as genuine and extremely valuable help.

A PERIOD OF ADJUSTMENT

Of course, there are many factors that contribute to how much or little involved grandparents may be with any grandchild or grandchildren: their ages; their proximity to the parents' location; their closeness with their children; and even how many grandchildren they have in total. Twin grandchildren can certainly have a special quality to them, but not compared to these other factors. In our cases, when our twins were born, my family lived about a thirty minute drive away, while my in-laws were only five minutes away. My in-laws are also a few years younger than my parents, and had both retired. My mother, Rosalind, had

retired but my father, Joel, now over seventy, continues to work as a psychiatrist. One other difference is that while my parents have four other grandchildren, these are my wife's parents' only grandchildren. Can you say the word "spoil?" But actually, in reality, my in-laws, Joe and Sharon Goldstein, and my own parents are good about not going overboard.

Perhaps the hardest thing for any grandparent to digest is the fact that they are not the parent. Not only that, but their role has changed. They are now supporting and providing guidance when needed to their adult child and his or her spouse. It is true that grandparents bring lots of experience in child rearing, but the reality is that they are not the

parents anymore, and while they certainly might want to prevent their children from making the same mistakes they did, they don't make the final decisions when it comes to their grandchildren. This especially applies to twins because most of their grandparents raised singletons, or children of various ages and the same rules don't always apply as parents of multiples know.

My wife Lisa and I received lots of advice from friends when our son and daughter were born, and some of it did not work with twins, especially when it came to feeding them. But it is certainly more difficult to reject advice from grandparents. So my suggestion for both parents and grandparents is to keep an

open line of communication, and to do so respectfully. There is a period of adjustment for grandparents and it is understandable if they take some time to adapt to “twin grand-parenting.” As parents, we likewise, need to be patient with them too.

WAYS TO HELP

Grandparents can help in many ways but the biggest one is by either assisting parents taking care of the children or actually babysitting them. This may seem obvious, but this likely means coming to the twins’ family’s home, rather than having them visit. The later might be the norm with a singleton child, but it is very difficult for parents of multiples to pack up young twins and bring them over to visit. There is twice as much equipment, extra clothing, and toys to bring. Grandparents coming over to help with feedings or to give parents a break are incredibly helpful. Both sets of grandparents came over regularly during the first year to assist us (mainly my wife actually) with our twin babies.

If babysitting is going to occur at the grandparents’ home, making sure the right equipment is available for them is important. For frequent visits, such items as a change table, portable crib and/or playpen, and even safety plugs for electrical outlets could be provided by the parents. During the first year, there was a crib at both our parents’ homes. We were able to provide one of them, because a friend offered it to us, as he was getting rid of it.

Grandparents can also be helpful with day care or school drop off and pick up. Several parents of twins have told me that they have purchased car seats for the grandparents, often used, in order to facilitate transportation of the twins. Your local Parents of Multiples group can be a great source for these purchases as well as websites such as Kijiji or Craigslist. This also allows for grandparents to take their grandchildren to programs, such as those offered at community centres and libraries. Both sets of grandparents assisted my wife during her maternity leave at these types of programs. And when we need someone to take a child to a program now, we can call a grandparent for assistance.

WHAT DID THE GRANDPARENTS LEARN?

I asked my own parents and in-laws what they had learned from their first few years of being the grandparents of twins. My mother-in-law, Sharon Goldstein, mentioned that she was surprised that our boy and girl twins each gravitated to gender typical toys despite being provided with access to both. My father-in-law, Joe Goldstein, said he was “truly pleased to see how well they share. I don’t know if it is because they are twins so (they) are used to sharing things and space or whether it is a compliment to their parents. Probably it is both.” I will take this as a compliment, but he makes a salient point.

“The most obvious observation,” according to my mother, Rosalind Jeffries, “is that it is more exhausting than raising a singleton.” Having only raised twins, I will have to take her word on that! She further acknowledges that she gets to watch “two children grow up with each other and interact in a very special way.” My wife and I believe that twins have a special bond and this may be what my mother is observing. My father, Joel Jeffries, also mentioned the fatigue factor for the parents when the twins are infants. He also responded that gift giving can be a challenge—deciding whether to give each a gift or one larger one and trying to make the gifts as equal as possible. I would suggest this would be an issue to be dealt with eventually by all parents and grandparents of multiples.

Grandparents are normally going to be important in the lives of both their adult children and their grandchildren, but with twins this can be magnified. This is especially true if the grandparents understand that their role is different, and that raising twins is a unique parenting venture that requires specific help and understanding. When the grandparents come away with “learning opportunities” about this unique parenting adventure, everyone wins! ♥

Steven Jeffries is an elementary teacher, husband to the family photographer, Lisa, and father of six year old twins. He and his family reside near Toronto, Ontario. He writes about parenting twins at his website www.twiceblessedguidetotwins.com

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www.TwinsMagazine.com/main-menu/cutekidcontest



Double Takes March/April 2013



1

Aaron & Alex Ervin-ID
5-years-old
Cincinnati, OH



3

Makenna & Kayla -FR
5-years-old
Pebble Beach, CA



7

Brooke & Brittney-ID
Age 10
McKinney, TX



4

Sophia & Aurelia-FR
7 months
Stuttgart, Germany (military family)



8

Nick & Luke -FR-4-years-old
Sophia & Bella-FR-4-months
Newport Beach, CA



2

Tyler & Emelia -FR
22 months
Scotia, New York



5

Jeremiah & James -ID
2-years-old
Indianapolis, Indiana



9

Arianna Alexis & Camryn Ann-FR
4-years-old
East Taunton, MASS



6

Karter & Karoline -FR
9-years-old
Lake Mary/Heathrow, Florida



10

Calee & Corine -ID
4 1/2-years-old
Wichita, Kansas

Celebrating 29 Years with 29 Sets!



11

Eli & Owen-ID
19 months
New Iberia, LA



15

Dakota Mae & Avery Michael -FR
2-months
Rotterdam, NY



19

Arianna Marie & Daniella Lyn-ID
4-years-old
Stuttgart, Germany (Military family)



12

Logan & Lacey -FR
9 mo. old in pic (currently 2 1/2 yrs)
Weatherford, Texas



16

Daniella & Samantha-ID
2-years-old
Johannesburg, South Africa



13

Ava Faith & Mya Hope-FR
18 months old
Boonton, NJ



17

Colin & Dylan-ID
2-years-old
Knoxville, TN



14

Noah & Dylan-ID
6 1/2-years-old
Brighton, MI



18

Naomi & Janelle-ID
8 months
Herndon, VA



20

Jaden & Cassidy-FR
Age 2
Fontana, CA



21

Olivia & Oaklee-FR
Age 6 months
Indio, CA



23

Cameron & Gabriella -FR
3-years old
Lake Worth, FL



27

Clair & Olivia-FR
Age 23 months
Round Lake, Illinois



24

Vivica Sammy & Vanessa Lynn -FR
Age 3
Williston, Ohio



28

Richard & Robert -ID
Age 2
Guelph, Ontario



22

Joshua & Kelsey -FR
Age 6
Austin, Texas



25

Liam & Landon-FR
Age 2
Orting, Washington



29

Greta & Cora -FR_Age 8
Franklin & Carlton-FR_Age 4
Huntsville, Alabama



26

Owen & Olivia-FR
8 months old
Newton, MA





M.O.T. RAP *(Mothers of Twins Rap)* by Sharon L. Bratcher



I wrote this rap on a "dare" from another member of our Mothers of Twins Club in Pennsylvania. I had come up with skits and goofy songs for one banquet after another, and then she said, "You should write a Rap." So I did. Five of us got up and performed it at a state convention in front of 400 women, who gave us a standing ovation. We had such a great time!

I memorized it and did the lines, while my "back up group" wore exotic kids' sunglasses and played kazoos. Every time we came to an interlude we turned around to the "4/4 beat" while they continued their kazoo playing - bomp, bomp, bomp-bomp, ba-bomp-bomp, bomp, bomp, bomp-bomp, ba-bomp-bomp. They also said the lines in parentheses together. The word "Well" starts on an upbeat, with "all" being the first beat of the measure, and it's the same after every interlude - the first word is on the last half-beat, or "bomp."

The M.O.T. Rap!

Well, all of you ladies listen to this
 We're gonna take a little time to - reminisce
 About the day when we got the shock
 We learned we'd be the first ones on our block
 To bring forth twins and to bring them home
 Well, mothers of twins, this is your poem.

Interlude

What did you think when you got the word
 That there were two inside of you - when you first heard
 What would you say was your reaction?
 Was it shock? Surprise? Or satisfaction?
 How many circles on YOUR ultrasound?
 (Four?) (Three?) Two?) (Only 1!) That would astound!
 (At your ultrasound) It could really dumbfound!
 (At your ultrasound) It was quite profound!
 (At your ultrasound) Circles superabound!
 (At your ultrasound) Your husband came unwound!

Interlude

Then came the day that you took them home
 And that was the end of bein' about to roam
 For hours and hours through a shopping mall
 These two tiny people had you always on call
 Was this the end of your shopping spree?
 (NO WAY!) Call catalog delivery!
 You bought a stroller with a double seat
 And you had the wheels that could not be beat!

Interlude

But most of the time - in your home you'd stay
 As they cried all night - and slept all day

And it got real hard when you had no sleep
 A sunny disposition was hard to keep
 You never knew you could be so tired!
 And you couldn't resign - or even get fired!
 You'd change a diaper on number one,
 You'd change the second - now you think you're done?
 Well, number one did "number 2" - and the second wasn't
 through
 My, my, you had a HINE-Y - ASSEMBLE-Y LINE-Y!

Interlude

Then you'd stuff in the bottles - or hook 'em both on
 Or take turns with spoons 'till the feedings done
 Maybe others helped - like your husband or friend
 Or your Mom or sister did two hands extend.
 Or maybe you prayed, or just toughed it out
 Giving love is what it's all about
 (Giving love is what it's all about)
 End kazoos and dancing and do these lines more seriously:
 Then you'd gaze at them - in wonder and bliss
 And give thanks to God, for the pleasure that is
 Multiplied whenever you see 2 small grins.
 You're doubly blessed, you Mother of Twins!

Interlude

Now before we go, we have to mention
 Moms of triplets and quads, whose comprehension
 Of multiple birth is far, far more. *All salute as you say*
 We salute the moms of three or four!

Interlude

Well, all of you ladies have listened to this
 As we took a little time to - reminisce! ♡

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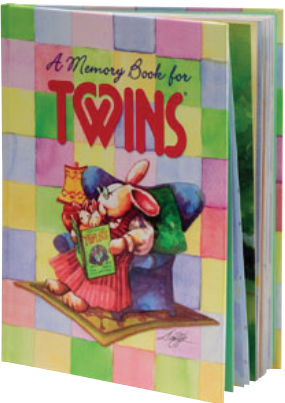


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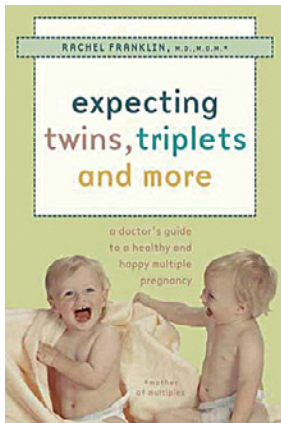
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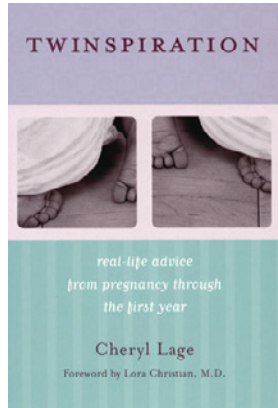


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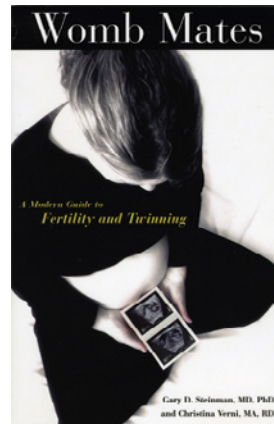
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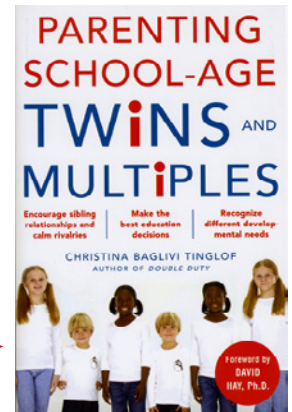
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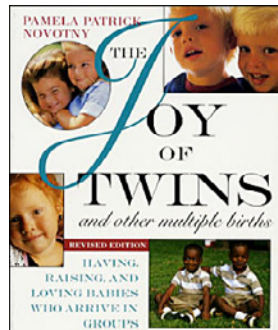
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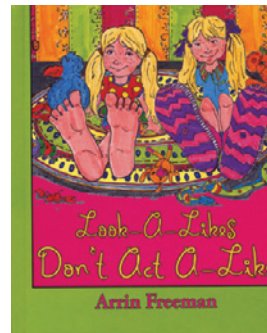
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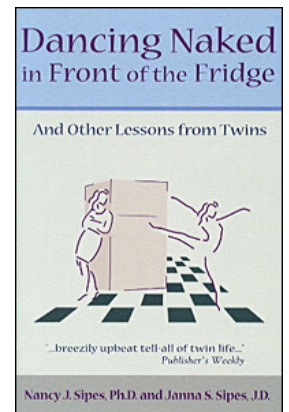
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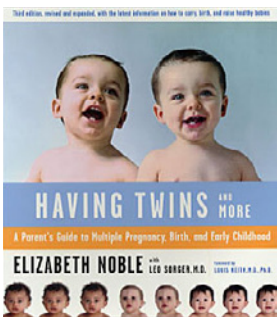
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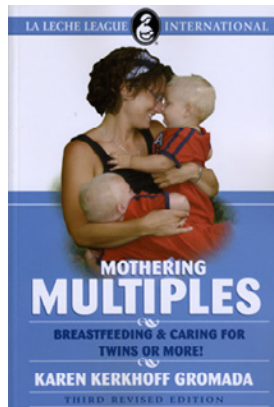
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