

The Magazine for Multiples Since 1984

TWINS™

It's Our
32nd Birthday
Issue!

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**Let's
Celebrate...
Birthday Ideas
for Twins!**

**Do Parents of
Multiples Have
'Multiple'
Stresses?**

**Tips on
Recovering from
a C-Section!**






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Olivia and Isabella are fraternal twins who were born on May 3, 2011 and live in Pembroke, MA. They are now sassy, animated 4 1/2 year olds that love to color, read, dress-up, sing, dance, and act in plays! Born at 31 weeks, Olivia and Isabella had to face many obstacles in their first year of life, but they did it together. They have an amazing, inseparable bond that still remains almost 5 years later. The girls attend Pre-K together and enjoy their many activities: dance, drama and soccer!

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Jam Versus Jelly...it's a choice!

The other day, as I was packing my youngest son's lunch with his favorite choice of sandwich, the beloved PB&J, I started thinking about something that I just couldn't get off my mind. While spreading some grape jam across his bread I started thinking about what the real differences between jam and jelly exactly were. I know it may not be one of the world's most pressing questions but still, have you ever stopped to think about the real differences between jam and jelly?

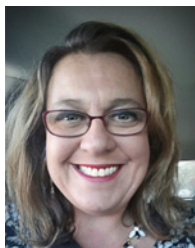
After doing a little research I was surprised to learn that jelly is merely an imitation of jam. Jelly is made strictly from the sugary juice of the fruit with additional additives and no real substance. Jam, on the other hand, contains both fruit juice and whole fruit cut into pieces or crushed and then preserved. Good jam has a soft even consistency, a bright color, a good fruit flavor and a semi-jellied texture that is easy to spread but has no free liquid. Jam is made with real bits of fruit where jelly is not. Jam is a preserved substance that gets better and better with time and jelly just turns into a runny liquid. Jam is the real thing and jelly is not.

As we begin our 32nd year as the world leading resource for parenting twins/multiples, we are so proud of our magazine, website and social media pages. To think of all we have accomplished over the years is rather humbling and exciting. So, in many ways WE are like jam...providing information in our magazine that offers even consistency, bright color, has good fruit flavor and is easy to spread. In other words, our magazine has helped thousands of families over the years tackle the most challenging parenting issues in the most consistent and 'real' way. We have published the most up-to-date research data and other important studies on raising twins; answered your tough parenting questions and we continue to provide real-life advice parents need when raising two, three or more children at one time. We believe that we do this in a way that not only educates our readers but also entertains parents needing respite from the day-to-day challenges they face.

We are the "real bits of fruit" you find versus a sticky imitation that is filled with additives and not made with anything real. So in many ways, TWINS™ Magazine is very much like jam because we have proven to be a consistent, full-flavored preserve that is filled with substance and just gets better and better with time. Therefore, when the question comes up jam versus jelly the answer seems very clear...jam is the real thing and jelly is not.

To celebrate our 32nd birthday, we are featuring a special section dedicated to twin birthdays. We have provided some wonderful and fun tips and advice you won't want to miss. In addition to celebrating birthdays we talk about tips on recovering from a C-Section; provide a complete list of everything you will need before you bring babies home and how to make the most of your pediatric appointments plus so much more!

Thank you to all of you for your loyalty and support for TWINS™ Magazine as we celebrate our 32nd year as being the #1 world-leading resource for parenting twins/multiples! We look forward to another fabulous year...



Sincerely,

Christa D Reed

Christa Reed,, Editor-in-Chief

twinseditor@twinsmagazine.com

Identical twins graduate together and secure jobs at same school

Two sisters of Bangladeshi heritage are keeping it in the family as they graduate from Birmingham City University (UK) this week and celebrate securing jobs at the same school. Identical twins Anneka and Sanya Hoque, from Yardley in Birmingham, are no strangers to working together. Having both decided to pursue a career in teaching, they progressed through an Early Years course at college before studying for a degree in Primary Education at Birmingham City University. Both Anneka and Sanya have secured teaching positions at Adderley Primary School in Saltley, Birmingham.



“We’ve always been very close and although we were in different groups on our University course, we still helped each other out a lot and then when we went on placements at different

schools, we were able to compare ideas and experiences”, said Anneka.

“We both applied for positions at the same school and thought if one of us gets it we’d be pleased. We didn’t expect to get roles at the same school but we’re so happy to stay together”, added Sanya.

“We are delighted to be graduating this week and accomplishing this major milestone together. It seems that we are inseparable!”

Young Couple from China Needs Help with Conjoined Twins!

Love Without Boundaries Foundation (LWB) serves orphaned and impoverished children in China. Recently, a young couple in rural China reached out to LWB for help with surgery for their twin baby boys, who are conjoined at the lower abdomen. The family is from an impoverished region where many superstitions exist about babies born with birth defects. Many babies born with birth defects are abandoned there, yet this young couple has refused to give up on their children. We want to help them so that their twin sons can grow up happy and healthy in their arms. Medical treatment in China generally must be paid for upfront. An excellent hospital in Shanghai with successful separation surgery experience has been lined up to do the surgery in mid-February IF the funds can be raised. They have already



photo of the babies with their father



raised over \$27,000 on their website, and they have also set up a **GoFundMe** in an attempt to reach out to others who might not be familiar with their story. Please visit their website if you want to donate:

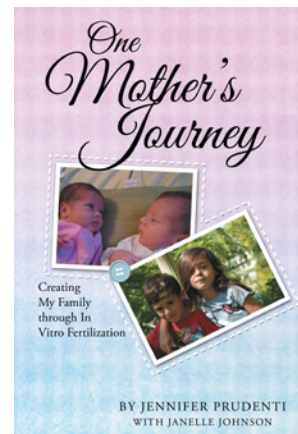
website donation link

You can read more about this special family here:

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

In vitro fertilization: what the doctor didn't tell you... Mother of twins unites women with honest, empowering story!

There is a new book now available called: *One Mother's Journey: Creating My Family Through In Vitro Fertilization*, by mother of twins and author Jennifer Prudenti writes candidly about her path to motherhood in the hopes that it will dispel myths and empower other



women. I as well, the book is a story of determination, perseverance and faith. "Through my experience and my honest retelling, I hope to change the stigma associated with I.V.F. and start an open honest dialog about it," said Prudenti. "My hope is that by relaying intimate details that people generally do not share, couples can prepare themselves for the demands that this journey will elicit from them should they decide to take this route."

Now available at Amazon.com

Twins in San Diego born minutes apart and a year apart...

Maribel Valencia gave birth to Jaelyn, a girl, at 11:59 p.m. New Year's Eve and Luis, a boy, at 12:02 a.m. on New Year's Day at the San Diego Kaiser Permanente Zion Medical Center, hospital officials said. Jaelyn weighed four pounds and 15 ounces and Luis weighed five pounds and nine ounces. Both infants and their mother are healthy even though they weren't expected until late January, according to the hospital. Additional reports stated that the babies were due at the end of January, but doctors at San Diego Kaiser Permanente Zion Medical Center called the mother in because one was in a breech position. The father, Luis Valencia, called it a New Year's blessing to have two healthy children.



Little Jaelyn and Luis were possibly the last baby born in 2015 and the first baby born in 2016 in San Diego.



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by Alicia Walters

Tips for the General Public

On Things NOT to Say to a Mom of Twins...

Alicia Walters is a mother to four children, including identical twins. She enjoys the humorous things her children do and say and is the author of Motherhood, or The Widening Gap Between Showers (available on Amazon). Follow Alicia Walters Blog on Facebook and Instagram.

"Oh, you have twins. That's double-trouble!" "Are they identical?" "Do twins run in your family?" "How do you tell them apart?" These are all examples of polite things to say to moms of twins. But what is it about being out in public with your babies that encourages complete strangers to throw all

sense of privacy and decorum out the window? Here are some of the cringe-worthy comments I've received that you'll want to avoid when talking to moms of twins, and any mom really:

"Were they conceived naturally?"

Do you really need to know? I'm pretty sure that if the mother wanted to be open about her infertility, she would bring it up on her terms. If they were conceived naturally, how does the mother answering in the affirmative not make the moment completely awkward? It's better to let the answer to this one remain a mystery.

My brother and sister-in-law are of the opinion that "If you weren't there when the baby was conceived, you don't need to be there when the baby is born." Of course, each individual mother's needs are different in regard to her delivery, but I think the same applies in discussing the personal details of how the baby came into being. When in doubt, you can always say, "Oh,

what adorable babies!" and leave the baby making questions alone.

"Did you get really big?"

Seriously? Yes, she did. And she notices your acne. Moving on.

"Did you nurse them?"

Breastfeeding is a potentially sensitive topic for many moms and twin moms are no different. At the very least, breastfeeding may not be a topic that the twin mom is willing to discuss with just anyone who asks about it. It is better to play it safe than sorry and potentially hurt a twin mom's feelings. She has enough on her plate and doesn't need your judgement whether it is implied or not. If you really have the baby's best interest at heart, you'll leave her mother alone.

While I strongly support breastfeeding as a healthy choice for moms and their babies, I was simply not able to breastfeed my twins for various reasons. Consider that it really isn't anyone's business if a mother chooses to breastfeed and as much as everyone wants to pretend she is an expert on breastfeeding, unless you are the mother's doctor, you really don't know what you are talking about.

"You are done, right?"

Please don't ever say this to a mother in front of her children. What worse message to send to children than, "Children are so awful, you better not have another one!" How does asking an exhausted mom of twins this question help her to feel good? I cannot imagine any excuse for asking this question and so if you know of one, please enlighten me. When people would ask my

aunt, "How many children are you going to have?" I believe she would reply, "All of them."

There's a saying among twin moms, "If you think my hands are full, you should see my heart." If the mother is done having children, you will know when she doesn't get pregnant again. And if she isn't done having children and would like to have more, your question is only going to cause a sting in her heart. What if she wants another child, but is unable to conceive again? Just don't ask this question.

"Do you need any help?"

Joking! This one is definitely a go and it is infinitely better than "You must have your hands full!" Coming from a friend or neighbor, asking twin moms if they need any help is the best thing you can ask. Chances are they do need your help, even if they aren't willing to admit it. Even if you don't know them well enough to babysit for them, you can offer to run their errands. They probably don't want to lug two infant car seats and possibly a toddler into the grocery store alone.

Family and friends who check in often and offer to come hold the babies or do some light housework can be a real lifeline to a brand new mom of twins. Just having someone check in and talk to for a short while can make a real difference. During my twin pregnancy, I was put on bed rest beginning at twenty-four weeks after going into pre-term labor. A then acquaintance heard I needed help and came to my apartment before her work day started to help bathe and dress my children and in the process became a lifelong friend. ❤️



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Confessions of a Twin Mom

The Quick and Dirty

by Marcia Siekowski

Marcia Siekowski,
her husband, twin girls,
Camryn and Maya,
and two dogs enjoy
spending time outside
and sleeping whenever
possible.

I recently had lunch with a friend whose little guy is 10 weeks old. First, let me say that I must have blocked out this age because I don't remember the girls being that small. I also had absolutely no desire to hold him which I guess answers the lingering question others have of more children.

All joking aside, she was commenting on how I put her to shame because I had two at the same time. "I have no idea how you do it!"... is a common statement I'm sure many multiple moms hear. Instead of making me feel like a mutant though, it makes me feel like a superhe-

ro. Because I am doing it. It may not be pretty, but I'm doing it. Here's how—no judgement please.

Laundry:

1. Don't separate laundry. Don't separate colors, don't keep the kids' stuff separate from the grown-ups or the towels. Just wash it all. In cold water. Done.
2. If it isn't dryer friendly, get rid of it. Then it all goes from the washer to the dryer. Enough said.
3. Don't spray, pre-treat, soak, or use other stain fighting methods. Throw in some colour-safe bleach (for sensitive skin), Oxy for babies, or some other product with your detergent and call it a day.
4. Don't buy or use white clothing for the kids. It will stain and it's not worth the hassle of stain fighting (see #3 above).

Eating/Feeding:

5. Feed the kids the cleanest foods for breakfast and lunch so there's no changing needed and save the messy stuff for dinner. They will be changing into their jammies soon anyways so that's that.
6. Let them eat with their fingers. Fewer dishes. Let the dogs clean up the leftovers. Use baby wipes for cleanup (see #8 below).
7. The less food preparation the better. Anything you can eat raw, room temperature, frozen even, do it.

Cleaning:

8. Baby wipes. For everything.
9. If you have pets, let them clean up the mess from the kids. Why not? My rule is that once it hits the floor it's fair game.
10. What doesn't kill them makes them stronger. They will have strong immune systems if things aren't perfectly clean.
11. Keep a storage bench or ottoman in your living room to put all the toys into at the end of the day.



12. Baths are highly overrated. They are stressful for everyone in the beginning and really not necessary (see #8 above re: baby wipes).

Dressing:

- 13. Sleepers are okay for the first six months all day every day. Change when needed but don't feel you have to unless they are covered in poop, pee, or spit up. Milk it (no pun intended) for as long as you can. Sleepers are also okay after the first six months for doctor's visits. Don't let anyone tell you any different. So much easier.
- 14. Sleepers with zippers. When you're doing everything two or three times (or more!) and your child doesn't want to be changed, zippers will change your life. Fun fact, did you know some sleepers have 17 snaps?
- 15. I have become a night shower-er. After the girls go to bed, I shower. Then I put on something somewhat sporty that acts as both pajamas and an outfit for the next day. Minimal changing necessary. Less laundry.

Other:

- 16. Don't disturb a perfectly happy child. They will learn to amuse themselves and play with each other. And you can do dishes or drink your coffee.
- 17. Don't try to keep your kids things separate. Bottles, soothers, toothbrushes, clothes. Until they are old enough to do this them-

selves, it's just easier. Another story when they are sick but if they are well...

- 18. Let them nap together in the playpen during the day while they are small enough. This accomplishes a few things: gets them used to ambient noise, fewer trips up and down stairs or back and forth to nursery, and allows them to learn to distinguish between day and night, all encouraging healthy sleep habits for later.
- 19. Frozen washcloths are a saving grace when babies are teething. Keep a bunch of baby washcloths on hand, get them wet, wring them out, and put in a Ziploc bag in the freezer. I kept four in there at all times so there were always two back up washcloths after the first ones melted. They are a great distraction even when they're not teething and just fussy.
- 20. Order whatever you can online provided that you get free shipping. Anytime you don't have to run out is a blessing. Then you can choose to if you're up to it.
- 21. So there you have it. These are my ever evolving rules for survival. Take what you can, discard what you can't, and do what you have to do. The easier you make things for yourself, the more time and capacity you'll have to actually enjoy your little ones. Take it from someone who was formally OCD and still learning all the time how to let go—the things that are not worth doing are worth letting go. ♥

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A Must-Have List of Everything a Mom of Multiples 'Really' Needs before Babies Come Home!



by Linda Baraban, R.N.

Linda Baraban, R.N. is the founder of the Kansas City higher multiples group and is a proud mom of triplets..

When 20 mothers of triplets and quadruplets responded to a survey about their babies' needs during infancy, the following essential and useful supplementary items were identified. Since purchasing triple (or more) the amounts of equipment and baby supplies at one time involves a major expenditure. These mothers of multiples'

comments are designed to help expectant parents of multiples avoid costly buying mistakes. This advice works for twins, too!

CLOTHING

Sleepers: Three each in cool climates. The least expensive sleepers are sized smaller and fit four to five pound babies well. Expensive preemie clothing is outgrown in two to four weeks. Onesies: In warm climates, three each of these light, one-piece outfits.

T-Shirts: Seldom used; three per baby if they have difficulty maintaining body temperature.

Sweaters: One each; hooded sweaters with back zippers are most convenient. Since sleeves on the 9 to 12-month size can be used most of the first year.

Booties: Two pair each; discount stores carry booties—sold three pair to a package—that are small, stretchy and stay on tiny preemie feet.

Pram suits: One per child in cold climates; these are warm enough for trips in the car, or stroller rides on a chilly day. Buy over-sized, one-piece suits with a single zipper, since babies grow quickly and must fit in these suits fully clothed. Avoid unwieldy snow suits that separate hand and foot covers; they are time-consuming to put on singletons, let alone multiples.

Clothing quantities listed above and linen quantities listed below are based on doing laundry every two days.

LINENS

Fitted crib sheets: One per crib, plus one for emergency linen changes. Two per crib is ideal. If trying to avoid a variety of sheet patterns in a shared nursery, buy all cri sheets alike to avoid changing three or more crib sheets when only one is soiled.

Receiving Blankets: Two for each baby.

Crib Blankets: One for each baby they outgrow their receiving blankets. Decorative crib quilts that match bumper sets are expensive and heavy, constituting a suffocation hazard to newborns. Lightweight, thermal blankets cling to active little ones; air flows more freely should a baby's head get trapped under a blanket.

Bumper pad: One set for each crib.

Flannel lap pads: Two for each baby; used under the babies' bottoms to protect the crib sheets, saving linen changes.

Hooded bath towels: One per child; a nice, nonessential item.

Infant wash cloths: Two for each baby; also a nonessential.

FEEDING ITEMS

Bottles: Most formula-fed newborns eat every three hours, adding up to eight bottles daily per baby. If preparing formula daily, 24 bottles will be enough for triplets. Nursing mothers will need one to two bottles per baby to give water or juice. To keep bottles straight, buy a specific colored bottle for each baby. Have the hospital nurses save the disposable four-ounce glass formula bottles use for babies in the nursery; wash and reuse them until newborns take amounts large enough for the eight-ounce plastic bottles. Nipples and collars come with most bottles. Small babies have difficulty latching onto the nipples of disposable nurser bottles, making them unpopular with most parents.

Nipple caddy: Buy one or two of these inexpensive baskets to hold bottle nipples and collars for cleaning in the dishwasher.

Breast pump: Electric pumps provide the quickest emptying. If you are pumping to supply hospitalized babies with milk, a physician-ordered pump can be rented from medical supply stores with an apparatus that allows both breasts to be pumped simultaneously.

Formula: Amounts depend upon how many ounces babies take and how often. Most hospitals send a one-to-two day supply home with each baby. Don't get too far ahead on formula stock, since babies are often switched to other formulas. Powdered formula is least expensive and very portable. Most people surveyed preferred the canned concentrated formulas, which are less expensive than ready-to-pour formulas, but quicker to mix than powdered preparations. Drug companies may supply free formula for triplets, quadruplets or more.

Pacifiers: Two each, often provided by the hospital nursery.

Feeding spoons: One each; since most parents we surveyed fed the babies simultaneously, directly out of shared baby food jars.

Bibs: One each; plastic bibs that cover and snap over the shoulders with a pocket to catch spills were preferred.

Diaper pail: One, or two for people with a two-story house. Some parents surveyed did not use diaper pails at all and would take diapers directly to their trash.

Diapers: Calculate need based on the fact that each newborn requires 10 to 12 diaper changes daily. Small disposable diapers can be folded to fit four-pound preemies. Ask people to save diaper and baby wipe coupons for you, the savings really add up! Even if using disposable diapers, buy at least one package of pre-folded cloth diapers to use for burp cloths and to place under the heads of babies in their crib.

Baby wipes: Newborn triplets require one to two boxes weekly.

Diaper bags: One large bag for long outings, plus a small stroller bag that snaps or ties to strollers and grocery cart handles. Always keep extra diapers, wipes, zip-loc bags for disposing dirty diapers and pacifiers in your diaper bags so you will always have everything you need on the go.

FURNITURE & EQUIPMENT

Cribs: One crib holds three babies for several weeks; one crib for each baby is ideal once the babies become active. Some families managed with two multiples per crib until the children were ready for big beds. Fold-up play pens can substitute for cribs.

Changing table: One is essential if caregivers have back problems. Many indicated they would change babies on their bed, couch or even the floor.

Playpen: A nice, nonessential item that provides a safe place for unattended babies. One large playpen holds two babies. When outgrown, playpens can be used to store toys or as a young toddler's "time-out"

place. Connecting play yards give even more space inside our outside.

Infant seats: One for each baby (some newborn to 6-month-old car seats will double for this.) Seats that can be rocked or bounced with a parent's foot to soothe a restless baby—while arms are occupied holding or feeding other babies—are essential.

Car seats: (newborn to 6-month size to 4-year-old size) one for each baby. Infant car seats are often available for low-cost rental at hospitals or local health departments. After babies reach the weight of 20+ pounds is when you need to switch to the next size of car seat. Many parents polled felt full-sized car seats were too roomy for use with newborn preemies.

Strollers: The tandem arranged triplet stroller is cumbersome but essential if caregivers plan on taking babies out alone. Parents of triplets who have helpers may prefer a single and a twin stroller. Parents of quads successfully used one side-by-side twin stroller with two newborns per reclining seat, or two toddlers sitting one behind the other in a reclined seat. Triplet strollers are often special-order items that may take several weeks to arrive. The most common triplet stroller requires easy, partial disassembly to fit in cars and minivans.

High Chairs: One for each baby, but not necessarily until the babies are at least 6-months of age. Some parents successfully fed babies in their infant seats and walkers until table-ready. Wooden stacking high chairs seen in restaurants are useful in homes with limited space.

Swings: One is essential; one for each baby is ideal, but costly and space consuming.

Walkers or jumpers: These are nonessential, but they help entertain and confine babies as they get older. Walkers with trays are useful for holding toys and snacks.

Crib Mobiles: nonessential, but great entertainment. One can be rotated to the different cribs as well.

Continued on page 16



Tips on Recovering from a C-Section



by Christa D. Reed

Christa D. Reed has been the Editor-in-Chief of *TWINS Magazine* since 2007. She lives in Colorado and is completely outnumbered living with ALL MEN (her husband, four boys—including fraternal twins—and even a male dog!

Let's face it moms, from the moment we discover we are pregnant we have this idea in our heads of how wonderful having a natural birth will be with no drugs, maybe even at home submerged in your own bathtub creating the most beautiful and perfect environment to bring this amazing new life into the world...

Now, fast forward to the moment you find out you are expecting twins (or more)... that idealistic vision you had just created for you and your one baby has now suddenly changed. Now you are facing the real possibility that you may have to forget

about all your homebirth plans and may even be told you will have to have a cesarean or C-Section delivery.

Having twins can definitely take its toll on your body and then add to this having a C-Section surgery and you will soon discover that it may be more challenging and take longer to recover than you initially thought! Here are some tips to help you speed up your recovery process so you can spend less time sore and tired, and more time bonding with your new twin babies:

WALK, WALK, WALK

You will be encouraged to get out of bed at least a couple of times the day after surgery – or even the day of surgery – to walk. Don't try getting up by yourself, either. The nurse should

be at your side the first few times you do get up and walk. In the meantime, get the blood going in your legs by wiggling your feet, rotating your ankles, and moving and stretching your legs.

Personally, I have had three C-Section deliveries and can remember even walking to the bathroom seemed almost impossible at first, but moving around is important for your recovery so you need to push through so you will be ready to take on caring for infant twins. It will also help your circulation and make it much less likely that you'll develop blood clots. What's more, it will make your bowels less sluggish, which will help you feel a whole lot more comfortable a lot sooner. For these reasons, you'll be encouraged to walk each day. Try to take your walks a short time after you've taken pain medication, when you're likely to feel more comfortable.

GET PLENTY OF REST

A C-section is a major surgery. Just like with any other surgery, your body needs time to heal afterward. Expect to stay in the hospital for three to four days after your delivery (longer if there are complications), and give your body up to six weeks to fully heal. This is where you need to enlist lots of family and friends to help you with chores and laundry when you and your babies come home. I am sure you have already heard people say, "Rest when your babies rest!" This is so important, especially if you are recovering from surgery. The household "to-do's" can wait and even taking just a few moments to rest throughout the day can be extremely helpful to you and your post-partum body.

MANAGE YOUR PAIN

Ask your doctor what pain medicines you can take, especially if you're breastfeeding. Depending on the level of your discomfort, the doctor might prescribe a pain reliever or advise you to take an over-the-counter NSAID (Advil, Motrin) or acetaminophen (Tylenol). In addition to pain medicine, you can use a heating pad to relieve discomfort at the surgical site. In any case, don't be shy about asking your nurse for more medication if you're uncomfortable. You don't need to suffer in silence, and the longer you wait to ask for the medication you need, the harder it will be to manage your pain.

LISTEN TO YOUR BODY

Be sure to take extra care getting around while you heal so avoid going up and down stairs as much as possible. A good idea is to keep everything you need close by like diaper changing supplies close to you so that you don't have to get up too often. It's also important not to lift anything heavier than your babies and certainly do not try to hold both of them in their car seats at one time until you feel stronger because you do not want to risk tearing your incision. Ask for help as much as possible and whenever you have to sneeze or cough, hold your abdomen to protect the incision site. It could take up to eight weeks for you to get back into your normal routine. Ask your doctor when it's OK to exercise, go back to work, and drive. Also wait to have sex or use tampons until your doctor gives you the green light.

WEAR LOOSE FITTING CLOTHING AND UNDERWEAR

You'll want to avoid putting too much pressure on your healing scar so it's best to either wear underwear a size bigger or you can buy special knickers that fit over the area to make it more comfortable while you are healing.

BEWARE OF A GOOD LAUGH

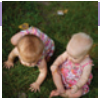
Laughing normally feels good, but not necessarily when you're post-C-section. You can be more comfortable when laughing, coughing, and even pooping if you hold a pillow to your abdomen. This will help your core muscles from aching. Anything that puts pressure on the abdominal area will probably be painful at first, but you'll feel a bit better day-by-day. Be sure to use your hands or a pillow to support your incision when you cough, sneeze, or laugh. ♥



You'll probably feel some soreness in the incision and you may have bleeding or discharge for up to six weeks after the C-section. That's normal. But the following symptoms warrant a call to your doctor, because they could signal an infection:

- redness, swelling, or pus oozing from the incision site
- pain around the site
- fever of more than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit
- bad-smelling discharge from the vagina
- heavy vaginal bleeding
- redness or swelling in your leg
- difficulty with breathing
- chest pain
- pain in your breasts

Also call your doctor if you feel sad and your mood never seems to lift, especially if you have thoughts of hurting your babies. Finally, if you have a friend or sibling who went through a C-section, try not to compare yourself to her. Every woman's experience with this surgery is different. Focus on your own healing right now and give your body the time it needs to get back to normal.



TODDLERS

Judy Gyde lives in Toledo, Ohio and is a former pediatric nurse who has twin nieces and a son-in-law with a twin sister. The pediatrician she worked for had about five sets of twins per month who visited the practice for routine checkups.



by Judy Gyde

Make the Most of Your TWIN'S PEDIATRIC APPOINTMENTS

When Kim brought her twin-toddlers to the pediatrician's office, one child cried the whole time and the other kept asking for cookies. By the time Dr. Carter entered the room, Kim was frazzled. Her children's distractions caused her to forget to ask a couple of important questions of the doctor.

This happens frequently. Many parents are distracted during office visits and forget to mention important details of health or behavior to their doctors. Perhaps this has happened to you. Here are some ideas to help your office visits go more smoothly:

BRING YOUR TWINS' MEDICAL HISTORIES WITH YOU

For your first visit, bring a copy of your children's medical records from your previous physician. Your new doctor is interested in their medical histories, previous surgeries, diagnoses, and treatments. Remember to bring immunization records. Have all your records in a file folder for safekeeping, and let the office make copies, but keep the originals for your home records.

BRING YOUR LIST OF SYMPTOMS

Before the appointment, make a written list of each child's symptoms and any questions you may have for the doctor. This helps you remember important information you may otherwise forget. Symptoms are like pieces of a puzzle. When you tell your doctor all of the details—even seemingly unimportant ones—it gives your physician a clearer picture of your situation. It helps make an accurate diagnosis and treatment plan.

TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT MEDICATIONS

If your twins take any medications, vitamins or herbs, bring the bottles with you in separate zip-lock plastic bags, labeled with each child's name. Your doctor will easily see what they take, dosage and frequency. By looking at your bags of medications, your doctor can prevent misunderstandings and mistakes. It's an important safeguard.

Your doctor may want to change a medication. If the physician doesn't explain why, ask about the reason(s). Sometimes

doctors are busy thinking and forget to clarify why they are making changes. Ask about side effects or anything you should be watchful of with new medications. Usually children won't experience side effects, but if they do, you'll know how to respond.

Everyone's body responds a little differently to each medication. If one of your twins is taking a new prescription and having a problem with it, call your doctor if you are concerned. Some meds need close monitoring to make sure they are working properly. If a med isn't working well, your doctor may want to switch to another one, which your child may tolerate better.

SCHEDULE APPOINTMENTS BASED ON PRIORITY ITEMS

If your child has several medical problems, select the most important one or two that need addressing. As mothers, we tend to try to solve everything in one visit. But this can result in inadequate time for the most important health issues. If there isn't enough time to address your child's problem thoroughly, a follow-up visit can be a good solution. Your doctor can make sure your child is progressing well with the new treatment and you can talk about your other concerns.

Most pediatricians and family doctors schedule or allot 10-minutes per appointment, per child. It's important to respect their time constraints. Doctors appreciate patients who focus on health issues and don't draw them into conversations about unrelated topics. Most pediatric offices will allow you to schedule your twins' appointments together.

Out of respect for your doctor, don't ask for a medical opinion related to another child's health if you don't have an appointment for that child. If your other child also is sick, it's best to schedule a separate appointment. This enables the staff to prepare each child's medical chart for the office visit and avoids confusion for the doctor.

Appointments are easy to forget, especially well-child check-ups. The children are feeling fine and moms forget the visit because doctor appointments aren't part of the normal routine. If you think you may forget, post a reminder note on the refrigerator the day before the appointment.

Doctors not only appreciate when parents remember appointments, but also when they arrive a few minutes early. Latecomers set the doctor's schedule back, sometimes for the entire day. If every person arrives early and uses the proper time allotment, everyone's waiting-room time is relatively short.

DEVELOP A TREATMENT PLAN WITH YOUR DOCTOR

Your doctor wants you to understand the treatment plan set up for your child(ren). If you don't understand something, ask your physician to go over it again and explain in detail what each step is for and how to carry out. No question should be overlooked if it is important to you. During your visit, if possible, write down important details that could easily be confused or forgotten.

SHARE YOUR CONCERNS

Don't be afraid to talk to your doctor about personal issues or uncomfortable topics pertaining to your twins. Your doctor treats all types of problems regularly and can help you. But your physician is not a mind-reader and can visually recognize only some aspects of your children's health, so you have to introduce the topics your physician needs to know about.

TESTS, PROCEDURES AND SPECIALISTS

Your doctor may want to order medical tests or send your child to a specialist for problems that need great attention. Certain screenings and lab work help your doctor thoroughly understand the roots or manifestations of certain conditions. Provide the nurse with the dates you are available for appointments or tests. This saves time and enables your nurse to schedule things more quickly for you.

A quality physician only orders test when they are necessary tests. Today things are different. Insurance companies oversee testing payments and won't allow unnecessary tests to be done. You can rest assured that your doctor will only order tests that are important.

PAYMENT PLANS

Bring your co-pay, insurance cards, credit card or cash. Your driver's license or identification is required for the first appointment, in order for your children to be seen. If you are having financial problems, many offices will allow you to use a payment plan. Like any other service providers, doctors expect and appreciate timely payment.

KNOW YOUR DOCTOR AND THE STAFF

Even as your doctor finds it important to know certain things about your family, there are things you may want to know about your doctor. It's time to ask how long your pediatrician or family practice doctor has been in practice and where he or she attended medical school. The physician and the office staff should be friendly and polite. They should return your phone calls in a timely fashion. It's important that their office be clean and well-organized.

WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD HEALTH

It takes extra preparation to make smooth office visits. Be especially alert when procedures or immunizations are being given to your twins—you're an important element of safeguarding them from medical mistakes. If the room is noisy or chaotic, it's possible the nurse could become distracted and administer a shot to the wrong child. With your watchful eye, mistakes can be prevented.

Your doctor and the office staff care about your family's health and will give you wise counsel, to the very best of their ability. Have reasonable expectations for relief of symptoms and cures. Not everything can be "fixed" instantly and medicine is as much art as science. ♥

Continued on page 16



PRESCHOOL

Joann Amoroso and her husband Jack live in Colorado and have triplets—a boy and two girls.



by Joann Amoroso

School Days

Knowing when they are ready

It is 384 hours and counting until Mary, Annie and Joseph start pre-school. They are 3-years-old and potty-trained, two major criteria for preschool.

I converted those 16 days to hours because it sounds longer. After three years at home, they seemed eager for new stimulation and adventures.

I, however, was having second, third and even fourth thoughts about our own readiness. Jack reassured me that the kids were prepared, it was just mom who was hesitating.

I reviewed all the notes from the meeting with the preschool director, looking for any misstep. I wanted to say "See Jack, we need to stop, find someplace else... event if it takes us another year...or two." There were no missteps and I really had no misgivings about the preschool that we had selected. I was just not ready.

I recalled the preschool's "trial days"—one of the suggested ways to adapt everyone gradually to their new environment—when I first took the kids to preschool. During that time we

were there I tried to stay inconspicuously accessible. Annie was a bit cautious but seemed to really like the whole idea of meeting new people her own size. Joseph surprised me by being "Mister Participation." He raised his hand and jumped in with both feet by the second visit. Mary had reservations and came over regularly for a hug. She did like the chance to use glue and scissors, though.

It was reassuring that they would have each other for comfort and familiarity. I had watched in wonder as Mary relied on her sister to overcome their first feelings of uncertainty. When snack time was over, Mary dutifully headed to the garbage can with her trash. About half way there, she realized she was surrounded by children she did not know. She turned quickly and returned to her table, where she asked Annie if she was done. She was. The two of them held hands as they traversed those



strange and new circumstances. I remember that moment whenever I worry about how they are doing.

Trial days are long past, but the first day I had to leave them was not easy. All three of them cried and reached for me until I thought my heart would dissolve into a thousand little tears. No words of reassurance, not another hug or kiss, no "I love you, I will come back" could stop the flow of emotion. I walked out of the classroom, down the hall and quickly turned into the director's office. It was there that I allowed myself to feel the full jab of my agony, away from the sound and sight of my children. The director handed me a tissue, offered me a chair and went to check on them. When she returned, I already knew that had quieted down and were turning their attention to class activities. I left feeling very proud of my children. I still called four or five times that day, but the director humored me with the reassurance that my children really were OK.

They have been going to preschool for two months now. We talk about what "being good" at school means and I encourage them: "Listen to your teacher, do what she says, share, take care of one another, learn somebody's name today and have fun."

Jack recently went to a preschool potluck and spotted Annie and Mary holding hands on the playground. Joseph was on the slide, not far from his sisters. Their teacher assured us that they do watch out for one another and said she is impressed with their listening skills, ability to follow directions and willingness to share with the other children. They truly were ready.

Whenever I go to pick them up, we have a ritual greeting and reunion. They all run to me, yelling "Mommy, Mommy" and we spend as long as we like hugging and kissing hello. When we finally uncouple, Annie always says, "You came back to get us." And I always reply "Of Course I did, Annie, Mary and Joe. I always will because I love you and I love you two and I love you three. Let's go home."

I find that my heart still wants to dissolve...into a thousand tears of delight. ♥



PREGNANCY

Continued from page 11

HYGIENE

Bath sponge: One is essential. Baby bath tubs may be awkward and were seldom used by the surveyed mothers.

Nasal aspirator: One for each baby to clear oral and nasal secretions. Most hospitals provide these.

Infant nail clippers; Baby Soap; Shampoo; Lotion; Baby thermometer: one of each item for entire set of multiples

SPECIAL ITEMS

Hand-held vacuum: For quick and easy clean-ups!

Small (two to four shelf) utility cart on wheels: Keeps diapers, changing and bath supplies organized and portable.

Cool air humidifier: For the first unexpected 2:00 am case of croup.

Plastic tablecloth liner: Buy one long enough to place under high chairs for easy clean-up.

Power drill: Helps parents quickly assemble cribs and toys and apply safety latches to cupboards, etc.

Automobile: For many parents, the arrival of triplets requires a larger family vehicle. When choosing, consider the large triplet stroller that completely occupies the back of a standard minivan or medium sized car trunk. In addition, check to see if the car's bench seat that has three seat belts that can accommodate three bulky, full-sized car seats. ♥



TODDLERS

Continued from page 15

**GOING TO THE DOCTOR....
6 KEY TIPS**

1. Shorten your waiting time by scheduling the first appointment of the day or immediately after the doctor's lunch break.
2. If possible, plan your appointments around your twins' nap schedules so they will feel their best.
3. Never promise your children they won't get a shot. Sometimes the unexpected happens. If they need one, tell them it will go very fast and try to distract them during the process.
4. If your office visit has been traumatic for your children, reward them with stickers or a treat.
5. After a doctor's appointment, wash your children's hands with soap and water to minimize exposure to office germs.
6. If possible, bring a dependable older child or adult to help you during the appointment.



Let's Celebrate

—BIRTHDAY IDEAS FOR PARENTS WITH TWINS & MULTIPLES

by Eileen Pearlman, Ph.D

All children's birthdays are special, and for twins, they are doubly special. Parents of twins have so many questions regarding this special day and rightfully so, they are more complex than a singleton birthday. These celebrations are an important opportunity to show your multiples they are loved as separate unique individuals who also share a unique bond. Parents confirm this in both their words and actions.

As a monozygotic twin and a psychotherapist who works with multiples and their families, I would like to share some of my personal experiences around birthday celebrations. When I was young, my twin, Elaine, and I would always share a birthday. It never occurred to either one of us there was another way to celebrate a twin birthday. My parents bought one cake for Elaine and me and then sang "Happy Birthday" to both of us at the same time. When we had a "Sweet Sixteen" party, again there was one party and one cake and our friends sang one song to both of us.

After Elaine and I married our respective spouses, Elaine moved to another state. It was then I experienced my first birthday without her. I had my own separate cake; it was just for me. Friends and family sang "Happy Birthday" to me. I found myself alone in the spotlight. I didn't know what to do. I felt like this was truly my first birthday party. I blew out the candles and relished the experience while missing my twin sister, who I knew was experiencing the same thing.

It is through my personal and professional experiences that I suggest the following:

Should twins share or have a separate birthday celebration?

This depends on the age of the twins. For very young twins, just having a party; that is what is exciting to them. They may not be aware of their separateness. Sharing a party would make it easier on parents, who are tired from the first years of child caring. Also

young twins are happy and content with their co-twin and a small select number of friends.

For older children, this can be an important time to discuss with them their separateness and uniqueness. They may have similar or different interests, desires and/or friends. Let them have a say in their birthday celebration. Tell them there is no right or wrong way and what they want one year may or may not be what they will choose the next year; it can be a year by year decision. You may also want to talk to them about what is feasible and the advantages and disadvantages to each scenario.

How do we celebrate?

As multiples get older and develop their own identities, likes and dislikes, they may want to celebrate their birthdays in different ways. Ask them what they would like. One may want a "Princess" party; the other, "Sponge Bob." If twins have separate parties, this does not present a problem. For those twins who choose to share a party, it will take more planning. I have seen many houses decorated in two themes. It is amazing how creative you can be and the décor will definitely be "one of a kind."

Should we have one cake or two?

You probably know my answer by now. It is so important every child feel he is special, unique and valued in his own way. For twins the need is even greater. Each twin needs to be acknowledged and have their own cake, whether they are simple cupcakes or more elaborate themed cakes.

Also, be sure to sing "Happy Birthday" to each one individually. No matter if the cakes are brought out together or separate. Keep track of who was sung to first and switch the next year.

What about presents? Should we give them the same gift?

One of the most special gifts every child loves, especially twins, is to share some "alone time" with each parent, grandparent, or friend. This is a gift that both of your twins will cherish. It will be greatly appreciated, even if it is just a trip to the ice cream parlor.



Eileen M. Pearlman, Ph.D. is the Director of *TwInsight* headquartered in Santa Monica, California (www.TwInsight.com.) She is a twin herself and is married to a twin. She is the co-author of *Raising Twins From Birth Through Adolescents: What Parents Want to Know (and What Twins Want to Tell Them)* published by HarperCollins.

When giving presents, it is most important that each child receive their own individually wrapped gift. If a large gift is given to be shared, an additional small toy can be purchased for each. For the very young child, there is no perfect answer whether to give the same or different toy. It would be difficult to know what toy each one would like and/or if they would each like the same one. Some parents give similar toys (two different books or two different cars).

As your twins get older and continue to develop their own interests and desires, there are more options. You can ask each twin to make a wish list and pass this on to others. There are times when they will receive a present they don't like. Or they may want the one their co-twin received. Again, this is a valuable time to have a discussion about being separate individuals. I suggest you talk with them about their feelings and share the heartfelt reality that they will not always be the same in everything they get or do. Inform them it usually balances out in the long run.

Celebrations are wonderful opportunities to show your twins how separate and unique they truly are and how much they are individually loved. These discussions and celebrations prepare them for life's lessons. ♥

Making MY Birthday Extra Special by Judith O. Hooper


Ask any child what the biggest event of the year is, and he will likely reply, "My birthday!" Very young children are usually satisfied with a "simple" party including friends, cake and presents. Twins and other multiples may be happy with a shared party (but not shared presents) in the preschool and early elementary years.

During the middle years, however, many parents find that the kind of party that was "just fine" earlier is no longer "awesome" enough to satisfy each child. Furthermore, each co-twin may begin to feel that he wants his own special party for his own special day.

Recently, I was asked at what age birthday parties should no longer be shared by co-twins. I think that the answer to this question depends very much on the particular co-twins in question.

Some multiples, of course, go on sharing their party on their special day throughout their lives. Some may want separate parties early on, and may keep them separate over the years. Others may need separate parties at one point in their lives, but later decide to combine them again.

It is important for parents to listen closely to what their twins are telling them about their birthday expectations. Sometimes one twin will want a separate party while the other doesn't. Parents will need to help the co-twin who wants a shared party accept her sister's plans for something all her own. And the child who wants a separate party may need to be encouraged to participate in her sister's party when it occurs.



In our family, we have a daughter and son-in-law whose birthdays are on the same day. Since we enjoy having as many festive family occasions as possible, we always have separate parties for the two. Usually, when the birthday falls during the week, we have one party the weekend before and one the weekend after. When 'the day' falls on a weekend, the two birthday kids draw straws to see who gets to have his or her party on the "real" day and who gets the preceding or following weekend. Parents may want to use a similar method to schedule the festivities should their multiples begin wanting separate parties.

One problem parents have to contend with when multiples ask for separate parties are increased competition of the "my-party-is-going-to-be-cooler-than-yours" variety. A simple way to deal with this problem is to put limits on the cost of the party, and thereby the overall size and "coolness".

Recently I talked to 12-year-old twins, Mike and Heather, about their recent parties. Their parents had told them that they could each have a party but that each party could not cost more than \$50.00. Mike responded by inviting 20 male friends, giving them home-made cake (from a box) and a jumbo tub of ice cream and tons of inexpensive snacks and soda while they all played poker. An awesome time was held by all.

Heather, in contrast, invited only her best friend and arranged for her handsome 20-year-old Uncle Will to drive them both to a nice restaurant where they enjoyed an elegant meal. What could be cooler?

Individual Decision-Making

By allowing each co-twin to decide on what kind of party to have within a very strict budget, Mike and Heather's mom and dad circumvented any competition that might have arisen. Each co-twin thought the other's party was "cool" but not what he or she wanted for himself or herself. This method of party planning seems to be an excellent way to avoid any jealousy or competition between the parties.

Parents need to take time to help each co-twin plan his own party by offering suggestions, giving help when asked and generally showing as much enthusiasm as possible. When each child believes that his wants and needs are being considered and that his parents are specifically interested in him as an individual, he experiences fewer problems with jealousy and competition.

On the other hand, I don't think that equal expenditure on each party needs to be the hard-and-fast-rule for co-twins who have separate parties. If each twin is allowed to choose the kind of party he wants, he is probably unlikely to be concerned with how much was spent on his co-twin's activity. Each child can be equally thrilled by gifts at either end of the price spectrum if they are exactly the gifts they each want.

Parents may actually experience the pressure of competition more from children of other families than from their own. There are communities where children's birthday parties have begun to rival royal coronations or presidential inaugurations in their elaborateness and cost. The irony of these mega-parties is that the amount of fun children have at a party has nothing to do with the amount of money spent on it.

One of my daughters still talks about the one she went to as a 5-year-old where the mom had spread a green blanket on the floor in an empty room. That was the grass. Lunch was all kinds of cut-up vegetables, fruits and nuts served in a big wooden bowl on the floor. The gathered "animals" were encouraged to snort and grunt while they ate from their food dish. The little girls had a laugh riot, the party was extremely cheap and easy and afterward, the mom cleaned up by shaking the "grass" out the back door!

Lost Opportunities

Some co-twins have shared friends; some don't. Children should be allowed to invite the same children to two different parties if that's what they want. Most parents probably won't have a problem with their children being invited twice, especially since even with a shared party they would undoubtedly bring two gifts.

It is easy for parents to get caught up in their children's shifting friendships and allegiances, especially when they see that certain children have been omitted from the guest list. As a general rule, it is preferable to allow children to make their own choices about whom to invite.

Some parents are concerned that co-twins who always want a shared party might miss out on an important experience if they do not have a separate party. Would they always regret not having their own special day? Parents may wonder.

If children know, however, that they have the option of having separate parties, their decision to share a party, I think, should be taken as a clear expression of their foremost desires. Perhaps they merely feel that celebrating their twinship is more special than having a day of their "own" would be on their birthday.

Birthdays are special days for all of us, and perhaps extra-special for multiples. In planning for the celebration of birthdays, it is especially important for parents of multiples to give their children a chance to express their wishes, and then to meet those wishes within limits appropriate to the family. ♥

Judith O. Hooper, Ph.D. lives in Madison, Wisconsin and is a marriage and family therapist in private practice.



Happy Birthday Times Two

Are you looking for fun birthday party ideas for your twins? Here are some examples from other MoM's to get your creative juices flowing... Check out all the fun twin party pics that some of our readers/fans recently shared with us:

Readers Share Their Fun Party Ideas!

PEG & PIN PARTY

Submitted by: Karla Dunham

Fraternal twins Josie and Adelynn from Hermitage, Pennsylvania celebrated their 1st birthday with a Peg and Pin party. Their outfits were hand made by Sassy Kat Creations and instead of using candles we had personalized peg figures made by Peg and Pin.



TOY STORY PARTY

Submitted by: Jessica Robbe

Fraternal boy/girl twins Griffin and Grace from Cincinnati, Ohio celebrated their 4th birthday with a super fun Toy Story theme.



DINOSAURS-DINOSAURS-DINOSAURS

Submitted by: Nan Robinson

Fraternal twins, Rhett and Reid from Tyler, Texas recently celebrated their 1st birthday with a Dinosaur theme!

EIGHT IS GREAT PARTY

Submitted by: Jessica Hughes

Fraternal twins Courtney & Evan from West Frankfort, Illinois had an "8 is great" party. They enjoyed a fun day at a local trampoline/inflatable place and decorated the party room with "8's". Mom used two donuts on a kebab skewer to make the eight. She printed out pictures in black and white of the twins from their lives (various ages) and made a poster board to use and wrapped the board in wrapping paper to add color. She also made the centerpieces with jars, peanut M&M's, and "8" candles. Mom says she always tries to get them their own cakes since they already have to share the same birthday.



FLYING FUN PARTY

Submitted by: Heidi Pfeifle

Fraternal twins Brett and Barrett from Angwin, California celebrated their 3rd birthday and had some "Flying Fun". They were able to get someone to take a normal size birthday cake and cut it in half and decorate them each.



THING 1 & THING 2

Submitted by Malaya Bowen

Twins Kannon and Kayson from Kokomo, Indiana celebrated their 1st birthday on November 12th with a super fun Dr. Seuss Thing 1 & Thing 2 Party!



ALIENS & BARBIE

Submitted by: Doris Viall, mom

Fraternal boy/girl twins Robert and Madeline from Peachtree City, Georgia recently celebrated their 6th birthday with two cakes. Robert wanted Aliens and Madeline wanted Barbie!



RAINBOW PARTY

Submitted by: Andi Milam

Fraternal twins Zoë and Olive from Los Angeles, California celebrated their 1st birthday with a Cake Smash Rainbow party. They had one cake for everyone else and two tiny smash cakes. Mom says it was the first time they had sugar and Zoe was not sure about it.



BASEBALL PARTY

Identical twins Isaiah and Samuel from Old Town, Maine celebrated their 10th birthday with a baseball theme and had their party at an indoor baseball arena.



MUSTACHES & CROWNS

Submitted by: Sarah Boyd

Fraternal twins Benjamin & Alice, from Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada just turned one and celebrated with "Mustaches" and "Crowns"!





Two Adoptions



Two Times the Blessings!

by Autumn Miles

Adopting a child is a uniquely challenging experience. The wait and anticipation can be grueling, and there are often heartbreaks along the way. For us, we knew it was the only way for us to complete our family.

I've known I would adopt since high school, but it took my husband Eddie a little longer to get on board. We had two beautiful biological children, but I knew our family wasn't complete. After a couple years of praying with Eddie, he decided that God was also calling him to adopt. Thus began the roller coaster of our adoption experience.

Not long after we began the adoption process we were matched with a young woman pregnant with twins. We were thrilled! We hadn't planned on twins, but just as in a traditional pregnancy we quickly began making preparations to welcome two precious lives into our family. We had the nursery ready, and had bought two of everything. We also offered to pay the young woman's medical bills because we wanted to be sure she was receiving high-quality care and the babies were healthy.

I travel often for my job as a conference speaker, and one of my engagements took me to the city in which the young woman lived. I wanted to get to know her better, so I offered to take her to dinner while I was in town. She told me her aunt had died, and she wouldn't be able to join me. It was a perfectly legitimate response, but something in her tone had alarm bells going off in my head.

I began doing some research, and I found the young woman's Facebook profile. A recent picture showed no signs of pregnancy. Praying it was just an old picture she had reposted, I kept digging. Soon I found the website she had bought the sonogram pictures from, and where she had been forging her doctor's notes. My heart sank when I saw the sonogram picture I had on my refrigerator for sale online.

Reality hit me: She had never been pregnant.

We were devastated. We had rejoiced over these babies, prayed for them and loved them. The loss was excruciating, and it was amplified because we were grieving over babies that never even existed. Sitting our children down to tell them their little

siblings weren't coming home was one of the hardest conversations of our lives.

In addition to the emotional toll, we had poured out tremendous financial resources into this adoption, most of which we could not recoup. We had to begin our process of adoption all over, and this woman's fraud set us back years in our mission to complete our family.

Despite the discouragement we faced, we were determined to press on with our call to adopt. We found two new adoption agencies and registered with both to increase our chances of being matched. Still, it took us over two years to finally receive the call of which we had dreamed.

A baby boy was to be born in Houston and his mother had chosen us to be his parents. We were overjoyed. Finally, we would bring home the child for whom we had been waiting years. Our biological kids could not wait to have a baby brother. With only days until his due date, we scrambled to prepare the nursery and bring our little Moses home.

Less than two days later, we loaded up to travel to Houston to pick up our baby. I ached to have my son in my arms, and Eddie had to fight to not speed all the way there. On the way I received a phone call from the other adoption agency.

The mother of a baby girl in Mississippi had also chosen us to adopt her daughter.

I hung up the phone, and turned to Eddie and said, "You are not going to believe this!" We were stunned that we were now looking at bringing home babies from two different states within a couple weeks of each other.

Eddie and I talked about it all the way to pick up Moses, and we knew we wanted to

adopt both babies. After all, we had made preparations for two babies before. We could handle this! How could we turn down a precious baby who had been brought into our lives?

A few weeks later, we brought our beautiful baby girl Haven home from the hospital. Our family was finally complete. As I watch them grow and develop, I am astounded how quickly these two babies, who are not biologically twins, have become attached to each other. For all intents and purposes, they will grow up as twins. They are only a few weeks apart in age, so they will be in the same grade through school and will be hitting the same milestones at the same time. What a blessing that they have not only received a family who loves them, but a "twin" to be their best friend!

Two years ago, I thought our lives were over. Our devastation was so overwhelming over losing our twins that we thought we could not press on. However, with help of our faith, family and friends we kept working toward our dream of adoption. Look what God has done! He has taken a hopeless situation, and redeemed it by giving us the "twins" we thought were lost to us.

My family may not look like most families, but it is perfect. We had to fight to get here, but we know that we are finally complete. ♥

Autumn Miles is author of "Appointed" and the founder and president of The Blush Network, a conference ministry dedicated to spiritually challenging the way women think. Autumn is an accomplished speaker who leads women's conferences nationwide through The Blush Network. For more information, visit www.AutumnMiles.com.



Do Parents of Multiples Have Multiple Stresses?

by Ann-Marie Nelson



STRESS: A constraining force or influence; a physical, chemical or emotional factor or event that causes bodily or mental tension and may be a factor in disease causation.

Raising twins or other multiple-birth children is exhausting, fatiguing, physically and emotionally draining... But is it stressful?

Parents interviewed for this article admitted they sometimes feel overwhelming exhaustion, but denied that double or triple-duty roles cause stress. They may simply be too tired to recognize the symptoms. Or more likely, they quickly learn to adapt their behavior in order to cope with their multi-task assignment as parents of multiples.

Take Sandy and Jeff Thelen of Farmington, Minnesota, for example. Stressful situations are rare for the parents of 12-year-old Chad and 11-year-old twins Eric and Linda, according to Sandy. "The twins were always easy, in that they took their naps and went to bed without any problems," she said. They were born at 30 weeks, and the tiny infants' premature birth and accompanying medical problems—especially Eric, who had hydrocephalus—dominated their parents' lives and was anything but easy.

"They were in the hospital for two months, and Eric had nine surgeries in the first year or so. We learned to take things day by day and week by week," Sandy recalls. "I think it helped us learn to deal with the things as they grew up."

Like most parents of multiples, she found that putting the tiny pair and their year-old brother on a schedule and sticking to it was critical for family stability. "Naptime was a necessity. It gave me an hour and half to do things I needed to do."

As the three siblings grew, they grew into a routine of their own—afternoon crankiness. "It always seemed like they became crabby right when Jeff came home and they would cling to me, which was hard on both of us since Jeff was gone all day and he also needed to bond with them." After spending a full day with three toddlers, Sandy needed time away from the children and household duties.

The solution was simple, "I would go somewhere once a week and that was Jeff's time with the kids." It was a special time for everyone—Dad alone with Chad, Eric and Linda, and Mom getting together with friends, shopping or bowling.

Establishing and maintaining a schedule is critical for parents of multiples, said Eileen Pearlman, Ph.D. a clinical psychologist in Santa Monica, California., a twin herself, she specializes in counseling twins and parents of twins.

A consistent schedule gives parents time to enjoy their children, Dr. Pearlman explained. Often parents of multiples are so busy they don't have time to experience the joy of their children, and years later, they regret it.

"It's really important to take time to sit back and just observe your children—watch how they play with each other and talk to each other," Pearlman said. Not only is this an opportunity to learn about your twins

and how they interact, but it's also a chance to take pleasure in them, she added.

But how do busy parents find time to sit back and observe, without multi-tasking by folding laundry or making up the grocery list and thus defeating the intent of "sitting back and observing?"

"Get help. As much as you can, however you can," Dr. Pearlman urged. If you can afford it, hire someone to come in for a few hours each day or week to help out with housework and chores that need to be done, she suggested. For many families, finances prohibit this—so joining or forming a playgroup or parents' cooperative gives Mom or Dad some free time on a regular basis.

One Arizona mother of twins has a neighbor who comes over for a few ours once a week, giving her time to "take a bath, or just read a book."

Parents can seek help or advice from other parents of multiples. "Talking with others who are dealing with the same things you are helps to normalize the situation," Dr. Pearlman said. "You begin to see that behaviors or situations that seem atypical to parents of singletons are perfectly routine when you're dealing with more than one child of the same age."

Prioritizing tasks according to what's really important can significantly reduce self-imposed stress. One mother of very active twin toddler boys found herself constantly picking up toys, wiping down walls and cleaning house—in between diaper changes, feedings (with baby food made from scratch) and regularly recording her tots' progress in a journal.

"I tried to be Supermom," she said. "Instead, I was Grouchy Mom because I was so tired all the time." Today her house may be messy and the baby food comes in jars but "we're all much happier," she said.

Nancy and Glen Masterson, of Gilbert, Arizona, are parents of 5-year-old twins Emily and Austin. Nancy admitted that the first few years as a new mother of twins tested her endurance. She quit her teaching job to say home with Emily and Austin. "The day I was manually pumping my breasts while driving my stick-shift car to work as when I realized I was trying to do too much," she recalled. Her firefighter husband worked

extra shifts to maintain their income, but this meant that sometimes he worked four days straight—and when he came home, he went right to sleep.

At first, Nancy laughed, "I cried a lot." But eventually, she came up with a routine that helped. "I started the day by putting the kids in the stroller and taking them for a walk, and usually I'd run into other Moms and we'd talk. I would end the day the same way." She also planned at least one outing a day, even if it was just a short trip to the supermarket. To minimize potential problems, she always made sure the twins were fed and their diapers changed before she left the house.

Now that the Mastersons' children are older, "I really don't feel stress," Nancy said. Frustration? Yes—like the first day of kindergarten this year, when Austin put his blanket over his head and proclaimed that he wasn't going. "I'm afraid I won't be able to find my sister," he announced. Nancy teaches kindergarten herself but at a different school, so it was Daddy who walked the twins to school and allayed Austin's concerns about losing Emily.

Separation anxiety can be a problem for any youngster, but the potential increases when twins have never spent time alone or away from their sibling, according to Dr. Pearlman—and that can be stressful for the parents. She encourages parents of twins to provide opportunities for each child to be alone, independent of his or her mate. "It's important for them to learn who they are as individuals," she said.

The parents of Emily and Drew Rutter in Tucson, Arizona, echo Dr. Pearlman's advice. Jill and Chris Rutter found that giving each child a special evening alone once a month became a positive event for parent and child. "It was eye opening for us—they emerged as individuals to us." Jill said, adding that the individual time was a solution to the stress both parents felt when the twins were younger. "We couldn't spend enough time with each of them, after having given our undivided attention to Scott, their older brother."

"Just being aware that one of them is more needy than the other at different times has eliminated some of the concern

we had about treating them as individuals," Chris noted.

Regardless of how parents label the demands of multiple parenting, stress management experts suggest that it is not the events that are stressful, but rather how you react to them. "Just being aware" may be the first step in reacting positively to the challenges of multiples and enjoying them as individuals who are alike yet different. ♥

Ann-Marie Nelson of Scottsdale, Arizona, is a freelance writer and mother of 20-year-old twin boys.

5 Ways to Maintain Your Sanity

Dr. Pearlman offers this advice to Moms and Dads who are new to the world of multiples:

- 1. Get help and seek advice.** Twins organizations, parent groups, family members and neighbors all can be a source of relief and information.
- 2. Prioritize.** Everything can't demand the same attention and time from you and if it's a choice between playing with your giggling twosome or scrubbing the floor, the floor can wait.
- 3. Develop a workable schedule and stick wit it.** Children are comforted by a consistent routine. It's important to their development and to your sanity.
- 4. Whether they are fraternal or identical, twins are individual beings.** Celebrate their unique bond, but encourage their independence. Try not dressing them alike when they are young, and allowing them to choose their attire (alike or different) when they are older.
- 5. Multiple birth siblings also need to spend time alone, to discover who they are and build their self-confidence.** When they're always together, and especially if they are dressed identically, people tend to see them as a unit rather than as individuals.



My **Micro-Preemie** **Twins**

by Tiffany Hoylman



It was April 20, I had been itching really badly so I decided to make an appointment with my high risk doctor to make sure everything was ok. It was there that they found that my cervix was gone, only .8mm was left. I was immediately put on home bed rest. It was then that things started going downhill. I was back and forth at the hospital all week due to contractions. On April 27th I had a follow up appointment to check my cervix...there was nothing left, and twin A had kicked through my cervix. We had to deliver that day... and at only 26-weeks by twins were born.



We really didn't know what to expect, and the doctors didn't give us much hope. They were both born weighing 1lb 14oz each. They struggled from day one, but they proved they were fighters, they wanted to be here. On their second day of life we were told that they both had PDAs, an open heart valve. They would need



medicine to close it, and if that didn't work, heart surgery. Brock, my twin A, only required two rounds of the medicine and it closed. Maci, twin B, received one round and it closed. Unfortunately she developed sepsis, she had staph in her blood and required heavy medication and blood transfusions. The result saved her life, but pushed her PDA back open, requiring a hospital transfer and heart surgery at just 3lbs. Brock had also developed pulmonary

emphysema, which are holes in his lungs. It took a whole month for him to recover from it. We honestly thought we were going to lose him. That was only month one. Month two we were able to

transfer Brock to the hospital Maci was now at so we didn't have to travel to two different places every day. They had both been on multiple forms of life support since the minute they were born, and with Maci's heart surgery it didn't look like she was coming off any time soon. Eventually they did both come off their machines and were put on a C-PAP and a high flow cannula. Then nothing, they were breathing on their own!



During their stay they also both developed staph infections in their throats and we had a NEC scare with each of them. Maci developed severe reflux and needed a feeding tube in her intestines to prevent food from entering her stomach. She suffered from extreme desats and bradycardia, she turned blue in my arms more times than I can count. They both were on more medications than I have been on in my whole life for problems ranging anywhere from liver issues and swelling, to infections. Since they were so premature they developed something called chronic lung disease, as well as retinopathy of prematurity (Brock).

Eventually after 111 and 112 days we got to bring our babies home, it was the best two days of our lives. They came home on apnea monitors and he came home with oxygen. Overall it was the scariest experience of our lives. No one should ever have to watch their children suffer like that. We were there almost 4 months, the support we received from all over the world was amazing. I truly believe it helped us all get through it. We know how different things could have been, and consider ourselves extremely blessed. They have been doing absolutely wonderful since they have been home. We are happy to say they just turned 6 months and our little 1lb twins are now 11 and 12 pound miracles!



Learn more about their story by visiting: <https://www.facebook.com/Prayersforbrockandmaci> ❤️

by Tobias Janiesch

TRAVELING AROUND



My wife Julia and myself are currently traveling around the world with our 5-month-old twins. But let's start from the beginning. Why would we travel the world with two babies? Well, initially we had a different plan. It was the plan to have a little cute baby and a relaxed parental leave time with our new family at home in Berlin. In Germany parents can split 14 months parental time between each other and the unofficial German standard for working dads is to take two of them. I, Toby, wanted to take exactly that unofficial standard, one month at birth of the child and one month when the baby is eleven months. But then came the surprise – twins!

Justus and Juri arrived on the 7th of October 2014 and changed our life and plans very quickly. Within the first three weeks we realized that we can't hold on to our plan. One parent at home with two babies and the other parent working full-time and late nights at an internet start-up is simply not what we

imagined our new family life to be. We started thinking, if we both take some time off, Toby for Justus and Julia for Juri then we only have to return to our employers in a couple of months. We wouldn't have any hard ties anymore and we thought babies can grow up anywhere. In Rio de Janeiro, in New York City or in Buenos Aires. So why stay in Berlin? Why not just go and cut off the bowlines and let our babies grow up everywhere and most of all with both of their parents. Explore. Dream. Discover :)

In the end the decision was easy. How often do you have twins in your lifetime? Never again. How often do you have the chance to spend every day with your baby until it is one year old? Never again. We were sold!

Explore. Dream. Discover.

A journey of one thousand miles must begin with a single step, so I researched all of the locations that are suitable for babies. What we wanted was 1) access to the best healthcare, 2) a stable government and 3) no intense heat or cold. I came up with a lot of destinations and bought 25 Lonely Planets to get my hands dirty.

Starting our world travel in March, we decided that we would begin in Tenerife – the island of eternal spring. From there, our journey will take us to Gran Canaria, where we will board a cruise ship and





make our way from Marokko, over Barcelona to Mallorca. After staying there for a couple of weeks, we will shortly arrive at the Baltic Sea for an annual friend's reunion.

In June we will make our way to New York City and then, with a campervan, we will explore the Californian nature parks. In July it'll be Sweden and Norway – time to enjoy nature and lakes. We still have heated debates about August. In September, our travels will take us to Italy's northern lakes and Tuscany. In October, when our kids celebrate their first birthday, we will walk through Japan with them.

Tenerife – The Island of Eternal Spring

I think that (actually, Steve Jobs thought about it first) remembering that you are going to die is the best way you know to avoid the trap of thinking you have something to lose. You are already naked. There is no reason not to follow your heart and the hearts of your families. If you live each day as if it was your last, someday you'll most certainly be right. For the past years, I have looked in the mirror every morning and asked myself: "If today were the last day of my life, would I want to do what I am about to do today?" If the answer was "no" for too many days in a row, I know I needed to change something! On the road, it will be interesting to see if and how our moods – and the babies' moods – will change. One thing is for sure though, the babies will be the ones making the call if they like it and whether or not we keep going.

Read their travel journal and see all the places they went in the world here: <http://withtwinsaroundtheworld.com/blog/> ♥



Tips When Traveling with Twins

Smile over the fact that you are running around with the buggy at 6am and are in bed for the night at 22pm. I hope with the tips below you can have a stress-free vacation with your baby by navigating cramped hotel rooms, on-the-go naps, and time differences.

- Packing / Unpacking
- Sleeping / Napping
- Jetlag
- Eating
- Credit Card or Cash
- Data Roaming
- Exposure to sun
- Where to stay

Double Takes

Your Adorable Birthday-Themed Photos!



1

Colton & Leighton, FR
Age 1
Hilltop Lakes Texas



2

Bella & Brody, FR
Age 1
Norfolk, Virginia



3

NaKayla & NyElle, FR
Age 2
Louisville, Kentucky



4

Theo & Thomas, FR
Age 16-months
South West London, England, UK



5

Killian & Piper, FR
Age 1
Levittown, New York



6

Audrey & Andrea, FR
Age 1
Philadelphia Pennsylvania



7

Julian & Emmett, ID
Age 1
Willow Spring, North Carolina



8

Caelyn & Joshua, FR
Age 1
Long Island, New York

January/February 2016



9

Marley & Mia, ID
Age 1
Laurel, Maryland



10

Thor & Loki, FR
Age 1
San Diego, California



11

Ashton & Elianna, Fr
Age 1
West Sussex, UK



12

Meera & Kole, FR
Age 1
Whitby, Ontario Canada



13

Hadley & Hayden, ID
Age 1
Greensburg, Pennsylvania



14

Eli & Ezra, FR
Age 2
Westford, Massachusetts



15

Scott & Sydney, FR
Age 1
Valley, Nebraska



16

Haile & Haven, FR
Age 1
Shelby, Alabama



17

Landen & Parker, FR
Age 1
Beloit, Wisconsin



18

Jailyn & Jordyn, ID
Age 1
Southfield, Michigan



19

Cason & Calon, FR
Age 1
Massillon, Ohio



Double Takes



20

Jared & Soleil, FR
Age 15-months
Elk Grove, California



21

Maisie & Mischa, FR
Age 1
Fountain, Colorado



24

Hannah & Olivia, ID
Age 1
Gilroy, CA



22

Shane & Tyler, ID
Age 1
Waltham, Massachusetts



23

Madeline & Carter, FR
Age 1
Houston, Texas



25

Adrian & Xavier, FR
Age 1
Charleston, South Carolina



26

Theodore & Arielle, FR
Age 1
Petawawa, Ontario Canada



27

Hayley & Chelsey, FR
Age 1
Erin, Ontario Canada



28

Orval & Oakes, FR
Age 1
Sedalia, Missouri



29

Karter & Khloe, FR
Age 1
Kingsville Texas



30

Lola & Ozzie, FR
Age 1
Lewiston Idaho

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31

Hank & Jack, FR
Age 1
Madison, WI



32

Blake & Brooklyn, FR
Age 1
Oshawa, Ontario Canada



33

Maddie & Sadie, FR
Age 1
Caledonia, Mississippi



34

Josiah & Jensen, FR
Age 1
London, Kentucky



35

Mckenzie & Makayla, ID
Age 10-months
Santa Ana, California



36

Madeline & Emerson, ID
Age 1
Grapevine, TX



37

Clint & Clay, ID Age 20; Cutter
& Colt, ID, Age 12,
Leetonia, Ohio



38

James & Melina, FR
Age 1
Lancaster, New York



39

Aubrey & Giana, ID
Age 1
Lowell, Indiana



40

Ashlyn & Jordyn, FR
Age 3
South Park, Pennsylvania

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