Intermountain® Healthcare

Breastfeeding Your Twins

Having twins or other "multiples" (triplets, quadruplets, etc.) is exciting — and perhaps a little overwhelming at first. You probably have many questions, including questions about breastfeeding. This handout gives you information and advice about breastfeeding your babies.

Should I breastfeed?

Breast milk is best for all babies. Breast milk boosts babies' ability to fight infection, is easy to digest, and supports healthy growth and development. These benefits are especially important for twins and other multiples, who are often born early and may have fragile health in the first weeks of life.

Doesn't it take a lot of time?

At first, most things take longer with twins — and breastfeeding is no exception. But things do become easier. Your babies will gradually set their feeding schedules, and you'll be able to feed them at the same time. The information on the next page explains this process.

Will I need help?

Most women find that a little extra support and planning helps a lot, especially in the early weeks. Here are some things that may help you prepare for and adjust to life with your new babies:

- **Plan to have some help for the first couple of weeks.** Can your husband or partner take some time off work? Are there other family members who can "live-in" to care for other children? Can friends and neighbors provide meals or handle other chores?
- **Identify experts you can turn to for advice about breastfeeding.** A certified lactation consultant, the La Leche League, or your baby's physician are all good options. Write (or note) the phone number on the back of this handout, and call with questions or for one-on-one help.
- **Talk to other mothers who have breastfed twins.** Advice and encouragement means a lot when it comes from an experienced mom of multiples. Ask friends and family for contacts.

Will I have enough milk?

Milk production follows the law of supply and demand — your body will produce as much milk as your babies demand. Here are some things you can do to support a healthy milk supply:

- **Feed often!** Breastfeed your babies on demand — and at least every 2 to 3 hours, for at least 20 minutes at a time. This is especially important during the first weeks of life. You want to empty your breasts completely and often.
- **Keep your babies close by.** You'll be able to see and respond to their feeding cues — the small signals your babies give when they're hungry. Some common cues include opening the eyes, bringing the hands up to the face, making small noises, and making sucking movements with the tongue and mouth. If you notice these or any other cues, offer your breast right away.
- **Pump.** Some mothers find that breast pumping in the early weeks helps to establish a good milk supply. Pumping also allows you to give breast milk from a bottle or some other route — this is helpful if your babies are born early or aren't yet nursing well.
- **Take care of yourself.** This means:
  - **Good nutrition**. Get 2300 to 2500 calories a day from healthy foods rich in calcium, protein, and iron. Keep taking your prenatal vitamins, too.
  - **Adequate rest and sleep.** If you have help, schedule one or two "mom breaks" during the day. A few minutes to yourself is good for you!
  - **Enjoyment**. As you care for your babies, enjoy getting to know them. It's a special time for all of you.

Getting started

Here are some tips for breastfeeding your babies in the first few weeks.

- **Use the chart in your Guide to Breastfeeding booklet to keep track of your babies' wet and dirty diapers.** This can help you know that your babies are feeding well.
- **Meet with a lactation consultant.** The consultant can help make sure your babies are latching onto the breast properly. The consultant can also answer any questions you may have during these busy, early days with your babies.
- **Breastfeed your twins one at a time.** This lets you focus on each baby at each feeding. Later on, when breastfeeding is well established — usually after 2 weeks or so — you can feed your babies at the same time.
  - Let each twin have his own breast for each feeding.
  - Let the first baby to nurse for 10 minutes. Burp him and then place him back at the same breast for another 10 minutes.
  - Repeat this process with your other baby on the opposite breast.
  - At the next feeding, switch the sides that each baby nurses on. (Switching allows the twin with the stronger suck to stimulate both breasts to produce more milk.)
- **If only one baby wakes to feed, feed that baby first — then wake the other baby for feeding when his sibling is done.** This encourages your babies to get on a similar schedule — and lets you have a bit more rest.
- **Once your babies are older and are better at breastfeeding, feed them on request, letting them take the lead.** By the time they're 4 to 6 weeks old, they'll probably have set their own schedules.

Doubling up: feeding your twins at the same time

As the nursing skill of your babies improves, you can begin trying to feed them at the same time. Here are some suggestions for nursing your babies at the same time:

- **Use pillows.** Four regular pillows (or a special breastfeeding pillow) helps position and support your babies correctly.
- **Try different positions.** Some good ones for twins:
  - **Double football hold:** With a baby on each side of your body, tuck each twin's legs between an arm and your side.
  - **Double cradle hold:** Cradle the babies at your breasts, tummies facing your tummy.
  - **Parallel hold:** Have one baby in a football hold to the side, the other baby in a cradle hold.
- **Let your less-assertive baby latch on first.** Give him time to get a good latch on your breast. Once he's sucking with a strong, rhythmic pattern, you can help his more-assertive sibling latch on. (Note: if this doesn't work well, try it the other way around, letting your more-assertive baby go first. There's no "right order"— the important thing is to find what works for you and your babies.)
- **Get support — and try to stay patient.** As you transition to feeding your twins at the same time, consider meeting with the lactation consultant again for more help and tips. Nursing two babies at the same time is an advanced skill! Above all, don't worry. As your babies get older and stronger, they'll be able to help themselves onto your breast.

For help with breastfeeding, call...

Lactation consultants. Call your birthing hospital and ask if there's an outpatient lactation clinic in your area. (There might be one at the hospital itself.) Arrange to meet a lactation consultant for expert, hands-on help with breastfeeding.

Phone number: _____

La Leche League. This organization provides support, encouragement, and information to breastfeeding moms.

Utah chapter phone number: (801) 264-LOVE

Your baby's doctor (pediatrician).

Phone number : _____

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