

Breastfeeding Multiples

Having twins or other “multiples” (triplets, quadruplets, or more) 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 provides ideal nutrition for newborns. It boosts your 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 be vulnerable in the first few weeks of life.

Will I need help?

At first, many things take longer with twins, and breastfeeding is no exception. Most parents find that a little extra planning and support, if available, helps a lot, especially in the early weeks or until you establish a routine. 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 support person take some time off? Are there other family members who can “live-in” to care for other children? Can friends and neighbors provide meals or handle chores?
- **Identify experts you can turn to for breastfeeding advice.** A certified lactation consultant, the La Leche League, or your baby's doctor are all good options. Scan the QR codes on the back of this handout for resources for 1:1 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 10 to 20 minutes of active suckling. This is especially important during the first weeks of life.
- **Keep your babies close by.** You'll be able to see their feeding cues (the small signals babies give when they're hungry). 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.** Breast pumping after feedings in the early weeks helps to empty your breasts completely and establish a good milk supply. Pumping also allows you to give breast milk from a bottle. This is helpful if your babies are born early or aren't yet nursing well.
- **Take care of yourself.** This means:
 - **Following an eating plan that includes a generous intake from all food groups.** Keep in mind that feeding multiples will increase the number of calories you need in a day.
 - **Prioritize self care.** Be mindful of what is most helpful for you to get rest and reduce stress. Even a few minutes to yourself can be helpful!
 - **Enjoy.** Providing breastmilk is important, but so is enjoying your babies. Feeding plans can look different for every family. If you need help finding a plan for you speak to a lactation consultant.

Getting started

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

- **Track your babies' wet and dirty diapers and feedings**, and amounts of milk pumped with an app or calendar. This can help you know that your babies are getting enough milk. Refer to section *Is your baby getting enough milk* in the Living and Learning Guide to Breastfeeding.



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- **Meet with a lactation consultant.** The consultant can help make sure your babies are latching onto your breast properly. The consultant can also answer any questions you may have. Most consultations are offered virtually and in person and are often covered by insurance.
- **Breastfeed your twins one at a time.** This lets you focus on each baby at each feeding. When breastfeeding your babies one at a time is going well, you can transition to feeding both babies at the same time.
 - Let each twin have their own breast for each feeding.
 - Let the first baby nurse for 10 minutes. Burp them and place them back at the same breast.
 - Repeat this process with your other baby on the opposite breast.
 - At the next feeding, switch the side that each baby nurses on. (Switching allows the twin with the stronger suck to stimulate both breasts which helps produce more milk.)
- **If only 1 baby wakes to feed, feed that baby first, then wake the other baby for feeding when the first 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.** Let them take the lead. By the time they're 4 to 6 weeks old, they'll probably have set their own schedules.

Feeding your twins at the same time

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

- **Use pillows.** Help position and support your twins by using regular pillows or a special breastfeeding pillow.
- **Try different positions.** Some good ones are:
 - **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 with their tummies facing your tummy.
 - **Parallel hold:** Have one baby in a football hold to the side and the other baby in a cradle hold.
- **Let your less-assertive baby latch on first.** Give your baby time to get a good latch on your breast. Once they are sucking with a strong, rhythmic pattern, you can help the more-assertive sibling latch on. If this doesn't work well, try it the other way around, letting your more-assertive baby go first. There is 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 guidance. Nursing 2 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.

Where can I learn more?

For lactation support and other breastfeeding resources, visit:

intermountainhealthcare.org/services/womens-health/breastfeeding

