

Won't I be too tired to breastfeed?

Tiredness is sometimes given as a reason not to breastfeed twins, but there's no evidence that breastfeeding in itself is tiring. In fact, breastfeeding mums can make the most of opportunities to sit or lie down. It's important to eat a balanced diet and to rest when your babies sleep.



Image courtesy of the Baby Sleep Information Source website. Photo by Rob Mank.

Once breastfeeding is established, it gets easier to go out or travel with twins, because breastmilk is available immediately and at the right temperature. Imagine the sheer number of bottles to be washed, sterilised, made up with hot water then cooled down for bottle-fed twins, and the cost of formula. Breastfeeding involves the release of specific hormones that help a mother to feel relaxed. This is particularly beneficial for mums of twins who are likely to have an even busier time than other mothers. Also breastfeeding will help your uterus (particularly enlarged after having twins) to contract back to its pre-pregnancy shape and size and will help you lose weight more quickly.

If families feed their babies at the same time, they may choose to wake the other twin at night to minimise the number of night feeds. Breastfeeding at night can be done lying down and can help to establish a good supply of milk.

But my family and friends want to help

Grandparents or others might ask if they can help by giving a baby a bottle, but if bottles are introduced early on, this may make breastfeeding more difficult to establish and reduce a mother's milk supply. Dummies may also mean the demand on your milk is reduced so the supply reduces. However, some mothers of twins do find that expressing breastmilk can be useful and allows someone else to feed the babies occasionally.

There are lots of other things that family and friends can offer to do to help parents of newborn twins e.g. cuddling a baby, changing a nappy, offering mum a drink or sandwich, helping at bath time if needed, or hanging out washing. The support and encouragement of friends and family is an important aspect to breastfeeding twins successfully.

More information:

Twins & Multiple Births Association
www.tamba.org.uk

Twins Facebook page and closed group
www.facebook.com/bftwinsuk

Expressing your Breastmilk before your baby arrives – ABM (an option to consider when twins are expected)

Association of Breastfeeding Mothers

registered charity no 280537

abm.me.uk

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Association of Breastfeeding Mothers

Breastfeeding Twins



helpline: 0300 100 0212

www.abm.me.uk

Will I have enough milk?

Mums expecting twins aren't always encouraged to consider breastfeeding; but twins, and even triplets, can be breastfed exclusively. Only a few women won't have enough milk for their babies. Milk supply works on the principle of supply and demand. Breastfeeding tells a mother's body to produce more milk in response to her baby's (or babies') needs. With two babies, more milk is removed from the breasts, so more milk is made. The best way to make sure you establish a good supply is to feed your babies often in the early weeks and to ask someone knowledgeable to help you check that they are attached and breastfeeding correctly.

During the first few days and weeks, babies send signals to your milk supply and may sometimes feed more frequently. This frequent feeding is sometimes perceived as a sign of a lack of milk but, if feeds happen responsively, milk supply will swiftly increase, and feeding will settle into a pattern again. Your babies' weight gain and their nappies will reassure you that they are getting the milk they need.

“I found out at an antenatal scan that I was expecting twins. I asked if I could breastfeed them and was told that I would have to give bottles as well. This upset me as I'd really enjoyed breastfeeding my other two children. The twins were born at 36 weeks (though I nearly had them earlier than that). They never had bottles. I'm glad I found out in advance that it's possible to breastfeed twins.”

How can I breastfeed two babies?

Confidence and the belief that it can be done are important. Attend a breastfeeding support group or workshop while you're pregnant to increase your confidence and find out where to get support locally. If you have any questions after your babies are born, you'll know who to ask. Perhaps you can be put in touch with someone who has breastfed twins (or see the Facebook group mentioned below).

“The twins were our first children and I thought I'd like to try to breastfeed. I read a little and a friend invited me to watch her breastfeed her baby. Most of the mums I met at a twins' club hadn't tried, but I decided to give it a go. Our babies were born at 37 weeks after a straightforward labour and the hospital staff were generally encouraging. I wish I'd known a bit more about growth spurts though and how to let the babies increase my milk supply at these times. I also wish I had known about antenatal hand expressing.”

Twins can be fed separately or together. Many mums find that they do both in different situations and when their twins are at different stages of development. Feeding babies together can be a good way to establish a plentiful milk supply quickly and can save time. While mum and each baby are still learning about breastfeeding, it may be easier to spend some time feeding separately. As the babies grow and their head control develops, it will be easier to breastfeed them together. Later still, the babies will be able to position themselves. Decisions like when to swap breasts and which positions work best, will vary from family to family.

“Don't be afraid to ask for help positioning the second twin in the early days, so you can have a go at feeding two babies together.”



Rugby hold, Parallel and Crossover holds

Breastfeeding cushions designed with twins in mind are more likely to enable a mum to tandem feed and even feed hands-free. However, some mums find they prefer to use V-shaped or normal pillows or cushions or use positions where no cushions are needed. If you have someone to assist you in the early days, they can help you position a second baby after the first one has started feeding.

“After a couple of weeks, I got the hang of feeding lying down and that made things a lot easier at night. When they were a little older, I managed to find a way of feeding both lying down. You get inventive about using different positions and doing things like answering the phone while breastfeeding.”

“Our girls are now 17 months old and I'm still enjoying breastfeeding them. Now they are toddlers, I tend to feed them separately, but I used to do a mixture of breastfeeding separately and together.”

What if my babies are born early?

Twins are more likely to be born early than single babies. If babies are born early, their mother's milk will be different to full-term milk and have specific advantages for pre-term babies. Breastmilk reduces a baby's chances of becoming ill and some conditions can be particularly serious in a pre-term baby. If twins are born very early, they may need to

be fed by tube or special cup until they are able to breastfeed. Expressing breastmilk for premature babies will mean a mother is making a valuable contribution to her children's welfare, especially as hospital staff are responsible for other aspects of their care. Donor milk can also be an option.