



Breastfeeding Twins

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Families and friends are always amazed when I mention that I am still breastfeeding my 2-year-old twin boys. Having twins is a very different experience from having a singleton with respect to rearing and baby care but for me having twins has become a normal part of our family life. Once you overcome twin shock, you realize how lucky and blessed you are to not only have one baby but two. Unfortunately, although the incidence of twins is increasing due to fertility drugs and treatment, many mothers are discouraged from even attempting to nurse two babies. Mothers of twins need to know that breastfeeding their babies is realistic and possible, you can successfully nurse two babies for as long as the three people involved wish to do so. Breastfeeding twins can sometimes be a challenge but the inherent rewards that come out of this experience usually more than compensate for any drawbacks. Mothers just need to seek out a little bit more help and organization at the beginning but once the wheel is rolling it becomes very hard to stop this great bonding relationship.

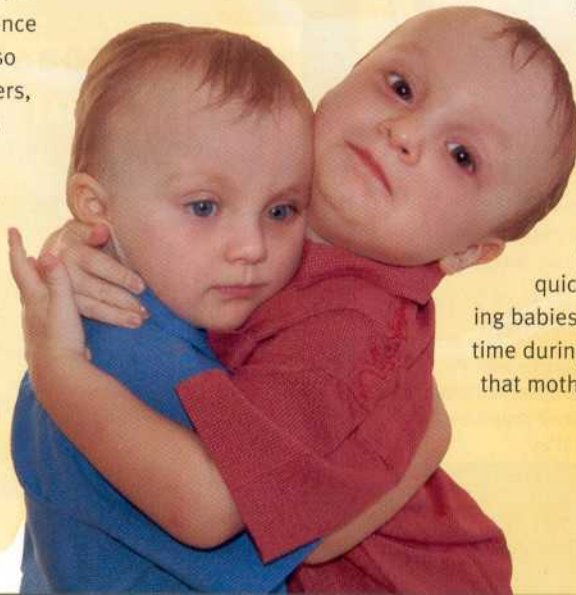
The health benefits of nursing twins are no different than for a single baby. Each baby receiving breast milk will have a reduced risk of developing asthma, food allergies and eczema; in addition s/he will be less likely to suffer from diarrhea, and urinary tract, respiratory and ear infections. Breastfeeding may help in the development of the nervous system and contribute to increased intelligence quotient. Breastfed babies might also be at a lower risk of childhood cancers, insulin dependent diabetes mellitus and chronic bowel diseases. Breast milk is easily digested therefore resulting in less gas, colic and spitting up. Twins have a higher incidence of premature birth. Premies benefit immensely from all the benefits of breast milk. The composition of the milk changes

at each feed and as the baby gets older as well. Once the mature milk comes in, the composition of milk varies as well for mothers of twins. It is higher in fat, protein and immunoglobulin. No formula can compete with this golden milk that adapts and changes at each feed.

Of greatest importance, breastfeeding affords the baby closeness with its mother that bottle-feeding does not allow. Many mothers of twins find it difficult to bond with two babies at the same time; the great thing about nursing them, especially together, is that it allows you to really connect with the babies as four eyes stare at you or play in your hair. Mothers of multiple are also usually at greater risk of postpartum depression but it usually does not occur as readily in breastfeeding mothers. Some of my best memories are of my boys holding hands in the middle together while nursing or when one brother would stroke the other's head. You never forget special moments like these.

The mother also benefits from nursing her twins because as the baby starts to suckle right after birth, the mother's body releases the hormone oxytocin, which helps contract the uterus, decreasing postpartum bleeding. Since milk production burns about 500 to 1,000 calories a day, the nursing mother returns to her pre-pregnancy shape or weight faster than the non-nursing mother. Research shows that breastfeeding may reduce the risk of the mother developing breast, uterine and ovarian cancers.

One very important benefit is saving time. Being able to breastfeed twins together allows you to save time otherwise spent on bottle and formula preparation and sterilization of bottles and nipples. It allows you to quickly respond to the needs of two screaming babies and therefore reducing the amount of time during which the babies cry. It is estimated that mothers of twins will save on average 8-10



hours a week especially if the babies are nursed together as they do not have to spend this time on bottle preparation. Time is crucial when caring for two babies- you do not want to waste a single minute. Breastfeeding twins can also save you a lot of money! It has been estimated that you can save approximately \$2000 per year when you nurse twins. That money can definitely be used for other things around the house.

A lot of people do not realize that you can produce enough milk for two babies. It is important to remember that your body is very well designed, and that the more often the babies are put to the breast, the more milk you will produce. It is very rare that a mother will not be able to produce enough milk. Watch your babies' signs: if they are wetting 6-8 diapers and soiling 3-4 diapers a day, then they are definitely getting enough milk. Remember that during a growth spurt babies can demand milk more often. These growth spurts usually occur at 7 days, 3 weeks, 6 weeks, 3 months and 6 months. Babies also cluster feed in the evening and will be more demanding. If you can nurse both babies together, you will secrete a higher level of hormones that will also help with your milk production. Make sure you are eating healthy snacks and food to compensate for the calories you are burning during nursing.

How do you hold two babies at once? Using a quality twin nursing pillow, such as the EZ-2-Nurse Twins by Double Blessings, makes a huge difference in your level of comfort. I remember nursing both babies while simultaneously tying my older daughter's shirt thanks to the EZ-2-Nurse Twins. This pillow also allowed me to burp one baby while the other continued nursing. You can also try to stack some pillows around you as a makeshift platform. Experiment with different positions and holds and you will find one that works for you. Here are some of the popular holds for mothers of twins:

Criss-cross cradle: in this position both babies are cradled in the crook of the mother's arms. One body is behind the other forming an X.

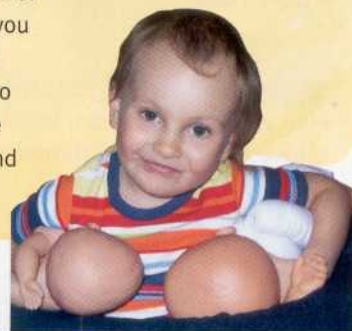
Double football position: this is a favorite position among mothers of twins. It does not usually put any pressure on the abdomen which will help if the mother has undergone a C-section.

It also gives you a lot more control over the babies and their positioning.

Cradle and football: this is a great position for nursing toddlers together especially if one twin is bigger than the other. One baby is in the crook of the arm while the other one is in football position.

As a chiropractor, I can not stress enough the importance of getting a baby's spine checked for nervous interference from birth. Twins have a higher incidence of in-utero constraint as the space in the mother's belly is usually limited, especially if the mother carries to term. If you are experiencing trouble nursing, it could be linked to subluxations in your child's spine. A chiropractor, with the help of a lactation consultant, can help you identify the problem if this is indeed causing a breastfeeding difficulty.

Nursing your twins can be one of the most rewarding experiences you will ever know. Mothers of multiples should seek help from a La Leche League group or a special twin support group. They can also contact a board certified lactation consultant who can help them prepare for the arrival of their babies. So, the next time you hear that someone is expecting twins, please encourage them to consider breastfeeding. It is the best gift of health for mother and baby that you can give.



Tips to successfully nurse twins or higher order multiples

Have an open mind.

During the first few weeks of adaptation, get help with cooking and chores—you need to concentrate exclusively on the new babies and nursing.

Have confidence in your milk supply.

Avoid introducing artificial nipples and/or pacifiers to avoid nipple confusion which may interfere with obtaining a good latch.

Find a board certified lactation consultant who can help you.

Attend a support group such as La Leche League.

Read as much as you can on breastfeeding. The techniques are the same, you just need to double everything.

Find other mothers of multiples who have nursed their baby successfully.

