



Mothering Twins

Mothering twins presents some unique challenges. Life is a little more complicated when you have two babies to care for at once. This information sheet will provide you with suggestions that can make life somewhat easier for you.

How Do I Nurse Them Together?

When babies are very young, they spend much of their time feeding. Breastfeeding them both together is a great way to save time. Furthermore, a stronger twin can help a weaker one by stimulating more let-downs.

You will need a large comfortable chair and a nursing pillow large enough for both babies. The arms should be wide enough to hold each baby in a football hold. A pillow with a strap that goes around the back is especially helpful. It is also very important that the pillow be high enough to support the babies at breast level. A "log" made of a rolled-up towel fastened with tape can be used as additional support if needed.

Make sure you have a safe place to set the twins down within arm's reach on either side of you. That way you can scoop up or set down one twin without disturbing the other's breastfeeding.

The babies can be positioned in a variety of ways: both in the cradle position with their bodies crossing, both in the football hold, or one in cradle and one in football. It is also possible to nurse both babies while lying down. In all positions be sure to use enough pillows to support the babies well. Most mothers nurse the babies in a football hold.

How Do I Latch Them On?

When your babies are very young, they may need help latching on. If so, latch on the one who needs the most assistance first, and then the other. If they both need help, you may need someone else to help you latch the babies; as they get older they will no longer need help. However, if your nursing pillow is at the correct height you should be able to temporarily let go of the first twin, freeing up both hands to latch on the second twin if needed.



Should I Switch Breasts During the Feeding?

Yes. Just like singletons, twins should be offered both breasts at each feeding. Early on, it is common for one twin to suck more strongly than the other. If so, it is even more important that both breasts be nursed on by both babies at each feeding, especially in the early weeks.

Should I Pump?

Most twins are born prematurely. If they were born at 38 weeks or earlier you should pump after most feeds. This will ensure that you will have enough milk for them as they get bigger and need more milk.

Initially, you should pump after each feeding. The milk you pump can be used to supplement the babies if needed or stored for later use. Once you are getting 2 ounce (15 ml) or less from each breast after nursing you can stop pumping. This is usually two to four weeks after discharge from hospital.

If your twins cannot breastfeed soon after birth due to illness or extreme prematurity, you will need to pump. This will bring in your milk as well as provide milk for the babies until they can go to breast. If you are pumping instead of breastfeeding, you should pump about as often as a baby would feed, every three hours.

For more information on how to pump, recommended pumps and storing breast milk, refer to our information sheet "How do I Pump?".

Can I Really Do This?

Mothering twins isn't twice the work of one baby; it's four times the work! Don't be afraid to ask friends and family to pitch in with food (casseroles, frozen food, getting groceries, etc.), housekeeping, and looking after any other siblings.

If you have a toddler, it can be a challenge to give them the mommy-attention they need. This is where having a good nursing pillow is especially helpful: while the twins are nursing you still have your hands free to hold a book, color a picture, play with toy cars or otherwise engage your toddler.

Meet with other mothers, take the babies for walks, and be happy with everything you are accomplishing!



Other Resources

La Leche League is a breastfeeding support group. They provide mother-to-mother telephone help and offer monthly group meetings in many neighborhoods in the Edmonton area. Call 4780507 for more information. All groups welcome mothers of multiples. However, one of the leaders of the "Edmonton Strathcona" La Leche League group is the mother of twins.