Breastfeeding, Twins or Multiples

Mothers of twins or multiples might feel overwhelmed with the idea of breastfeeding more than one baby at a time. It is easier and less expensive to breastfeed twins than to bottle feed them. This is because you do not need to buy infant formula, wash bottles, buy mild soap, and fill the bottles for more than one baby when it is time to feed them. Human milk is especially important for twins, who are often small at birth and need all the advantages breast milk can provide. Breastfeeding also helps create a unique and special bond between the mother and each of her infants.

Mothers of multiples get more benefits from breastfeeding:

- Your uterus contracts and returns to its original size faster. This is helpful because it has stretched even more than normal to hold more than one baby.
- Hormones are released that relax the mother. This is helpful with the added stress of caring for more than one infant.
- The mother often finds she is saving herself time and money, because there is no need to prepare formula or bottles. Your milk is available whenever your babies are ready to feed, at the right temperature, providing optimal nutrition.

If the babies are premature and unable to nurse, you can pump your breasts and freeze the milk until the babies are ready to feed at the breast. To stimulate a milk supply, your breasts need to be emptied at least 8-10 times in a 24 hour period. Ask a lactation specialist to help you choose an effective breast pump and to provide guidance in helping your babies latch onto, and feed from, the breast when they are ready.

TO GET STARTED:

- Nurse as soon as possible after birth, and as often as the babies want to do so. This will stimulate your breasts to produce adequate amounts of milk. Mothers of twins almost always produce enough milk for both babies.

TIPS TO INCREASE SUCCESS:

- Many mothers of multiples find it easiest to nurse the babies together. However, if one of the infants is having difficulty latching or sucking, the mother may need to give that baby her full attention when it is time to feed.
- Nursing two babies at the same time often gets easier as the babies get older and more experienced at latching onto the breast. Extra pillows under the mother's arms, legs, and under the babies can help this process.
- Breastfeeding two babies at once may increase the mother's milk producing hormone (*prolactin*) levels, and boost her milk production. The more often the babies breastfeed effectively, the more milk the mother will produce.
- Switch the babies from one side to the other at alternate feedings. For instance, if baby A feeds from the right breast and baby B feeds from the left breast, then at the next feeding, baby A should take the left breast and baby B the right breast. This ensures that both breasts get equal amounts of stimulation. It also uses the stronger sucking twin to increase the milk supply for the twin whose suck is weaker.
- If one of the babies is having difficulty feeding, it may help to try breastfeeding him at the same time as his sibling. The baby with the stronger or more effective suck will stimulate the mother's milk to flow faster. This will encourage his twin to suck and swallow correctly.
- It is important to avoid limiting the amount of time each baby spends feeding at the breast. This allows both babies to obtain the fattier milk that is available at the end of the feeding, when the breast is emptier.
- Avoiding bottles and pacifiers during the early weeks will encourage effective sucking patterns and help establish a good milk supply. You should not need supplements if you empty your breasts with each feeding.
- A good latch for both infants is important in helping the babies empty the breast effectively, and for

avoiding sore nipples. The most common cause of soreness is improper latch-on and positioning.

- In the early days, keep track of each infant's stools and wet diapers, to make sure each baby is getting enough milk. In the first 6 weeks, each baby should have 6 to 8 wet cloth diapers (5 to 6 disposable diapers) and 2 or more bowel movements per day.
- There are several positions and holds that make it easier to nurse more than one baby at a time. Ask your nurse or lactation specialist to suggest tips on positioning.
- If you know you are having twins, talk with a lactation consultant about more ways you can increase your success at breastfeeding.

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