



Nursing Multiple Babies

Twins, triplets, etc, are often born prematurely, even if only a few weeks before their due date. Breastfeeding one premature baby can be difficult, so if there two or more of them, nursing can be quite hectic. Parents who are expecting twins should mentally prepare themselves for this challenge, and then hopefully things will work out better than expected! Support from a lactation specialist is often needed, and asking for help sooner is better than later.

Some premature babies are unable to nurse adequately in the beginning. Perhaps they will latch on to the nipple, but their suckle is too weak to remove enough milk to gain weight. Many premi babies are sleepy and won't stay awake to finish a feeding. And some of them simply won't latch on at first. Sometimes mothers have trouble producing enough milk for two or more babies.

To deal with these issues, it is very important that interventions are made early on. Mom's milk needs to be removed regularly and the babies need to gain weight and get stronger so they are more capable of removing milk from their mother's breasts. Many times, it is necessary for mothers to pump regularly and syringe or bottle feed the babies the expressed breast milk, and sometimes formula. Hopefully these will be temporary measures, just to get things going. Your pediatrician or a lactation consultant can help you establish a feeding regimen, monitor weight gain and assess your milk supply. It is often helpful to keep a log of nursing sessions, how much expressed breast milk or formula is fed to the babies, and how much milk is pumped from each breast. Also keep track of wets and stools. We can provide you with a log sheet to keep you organized.

If you are expecting twins, it will be a good idea to plan ahead and make sure you have quick access to a good quality double electric breast pump. To get your milk supply off to a good start while still in the hospital, you can use their hospital grade Medela Symphony or Lactina pump. Upon leaving the hospital, you can consider renting a hospital grade pump in order to continue to optimize your milk production if pumping is still necessary. For moms with plenty of milk and babies who nurse well, a Pump In Style may be sufficient once you leave the hospital. After several weeks of nursing, when your milk supply is well established and babies are latching well, any of these pumps may be useful to allow you some flexibility if your babies develop slightly different nursing schedules or if you would like to have your partner take over a night time feeding so you can get some extra sleep.

Can I nurse 2 babies at the same time? At first it is usually easier to nurse one baby at a time. You will need both hands to support your baby and your breast in order to get a good latch that doesn't hurt and that optimizes your baby's ability to remove milk. When the babies have better head control and you are more skilled at breastfeeding, you can start nursing two babies at the same time. It is important that both babies nurse from both breasts alternately. This will ensure that each breast gets equal stimulation, since babies often have different suckling strengths.

Please accept any offers of help with house work, meals, errands, etc. Your time and energy will be needed to feed your babies!