

## Being a one parent family to twins, triplets and more

Being a one parent family is challenging for many people. Being a one parent family to twins, triplets or more can make the challenge seem even harder and more lonely. Whether you're bringing up children on your own by choice or as the result of a relationship breakdown, Tamba's One Parent Support Group is here to help you. This factsheet will help you through those crucial early days and weeks.

A multiple pregnancy is classed as higher risk than a single pregnancy so you can expect to attend more hospital appointments than your friends expecting one baby. It's really helpful to have a couple of friends nominated to go with you. Rotate them if necessary so that you don't have to go alone.

Additional advice can be found in Tamba's [Healthy Multiple Pregnancy Guide](#) and from the NHS through their [NICE Guidelines for Multiple Pregnancy](#).

### TOP TIPS FOR ONE PARENT FAMILIES

**1. Ask for help.** This is key to coping with life with multiples. And yet for so many it can be hard to ask for help.

Asking for help is a sign of strength and your friends and family will feel pleased and even honoured that you have asked. Remember that they may feel nervous about offering to help, but be very keen to do anything they can to lighten your load.

Getting good help and support in place is essential, both before the babies arrive and afterwards.

“Get as much help as you can from anyone who is happy to help. I had no one and I really struggled beyond belief - I didn't know there were people available to help like childcare students and Homestart.”

### Tamba's survey of one parent families in 2014 asked when had they become a one parent family:

Over 60% of respondents became a one parent family when they were pregnant or in the first few weeks or months after giving birth.

60  
PERCENT

11  
PERCENT

Only 11% of survey respondents became a one parent family by choice.

“Don't be afraid to ask for help, even when you feel like you should be coping.”

“Always accept help, no matter how capable you are.”

“Ask your friends to help you. I organised a rota of friends & family to come round between 6pm-8pm for first 6 weeks so I could put my older son to bed uninterrupted.”

### 2. Getting organised and finding a routine that works for you and your babies.

Establishing a routine once your babies arrive really can help both you and your babies. For some parents this routine may be established during time in the special care baby unit, as many twins and triplets arrive early. For others it starts once you are home. In the very early days that routine can be as simple as going with the flow of feeding, changing, cuddling, and sleeping.

**3. Stay calm and stay positive.** When you are a sleep deprived new mum to two or more babies, staying calm and positive can be a real challenge. And yet this little tip will help you more than you can imagine.

When we are sleep deprived due to babies feeding every 2-3 hours, our minds find it very hard to focus and concentrate. We become grumpy, clumsy and forgetful. So it is important to remind yourself that this is just a phase and to celebrate when you get a good three hour block of sleep. Looking



for the little positives each day, such as 'I fed both babies, they were loved and they are clean' is invaluable in helping you cope with the demands of twins, triplets or more.

“ You are doing great - you just need to remind yourself of that!!”

“ Don't get disheartened it is hard... but worth it.”

“ Believe in yourself!”

“ Don't beat yourself up with any of the juggle - you can only do what you can.”

#### 4. Being connected and supported.

Having a supportive network of multiple mums to go and see or to call and generally be your lifeline is hugely beneficial.

Being a parent of multiples is very different from being a mum to one baby at a time. Even parent couples of multiples are under immense pressure and often struggle as both parents can feel extremely overwhelmed.

Tamba has a One Parent Support Group which is a great way to connect 'virtually' with others in similar situations. Local twins clubs can also be a source of support. If you are nervous about going on your own then email or call the organiser to let them know you are a single mum and they will look out for you and help you settle in.

Physically getting out of the house can be a real challenge as you juggle buggies, car seats and all the paraphernalia that goes with small babies - along with the babies themselves! So getting a friend or relative to go with you the first few times can be a great help with the logistics.

“ Make sure you have a strong support network in place, either family or friends. You will need them physically and emotionally.”

“ Getting out and talking to other mum can really help just change your mood by letting you know you're not alone.”

### The survey asked one parent families if their multiples were their only children:

54% of parents who responded said 'Yes' their multiples were their only children.

54  
PERCENT

41  
PERCENT

41% said 'No' they had other children as well as their multiples.

“ Try as hard as you can to get out to things like mother and toddlers groups, and keep going even if it's hard to break into a clique. In time you will form friendships.”



#### 5. Housework and chores can wait or be delegated to friends and family.

In the early days and weeks especially it is impossible to do everything single handed.

Sometimes new mums' expectations of what is achievable can simply be too high. This puts pressure on you and can leave you feeling overwhelmed. In the words of one of our mums, "Don't sweat the small stuff, it doesn't matter if your house is not immaculate as long as your babies are fed and warm you are doing a good job."

Another of our mums told us that she always assigned a household job to every visitor. Whether it was washing up, whizzing the vacuum round or

hanging up the washing, she found that her friends and family were more than happy to chip in and help out - and delighted to be asked!

The other tip from our one parent families was the importance of pacing yourself and trying not to rush around and do everything while the babies are asleep. Pick one easy quick task, finish it then get some rest yourself as your babies need you to have the energy to go back through the routine when they wake up again.

**6. Be kind to yourself.** There are many joys to being a parent of multiples and there are many challenges. How we view ourselves and how we are coping with both the joys and the challenges can have a negative effect on us mentally - if we are too hard on ourselves.

Practicing the art of self-compassion and kindness towards ourselves and what we can and have achieved is something that our one parent families advocate. This is a combination of being kind to yourself mentally by not being too hard on yourself, as well as taking physical time for yourself each week. This could be simply finding a few minutes each day when the babies are asleep to listen to music or read a book. It could be getting a friend round to babysit whilst you have a long soak in

### Help that parents received before birth of their multiples:

73  
PERCENT

73% had friends or family come with them to antenatal appointments.

44% had financial help from the government e.g. via a SureStart grant.

44  
PERCENT

39  
PERCENT

39% had financial help from family.

31% had help buying equipment.

31  
PERCENT

(Parents could choose more than one answer)

the bath and enjoy your supper in peace, or you may feel able to leave your babies with a relative and go out with adult friends for the afternoon or evening.

“Look after yourself as well as your babies.”

“Be kind and gentle with yourself.”

“Set aside a bit of time each week or month to do something grown up.”



**7. Sleep whenever you can.** Sleep is essential, yet in the early days when babies are feeding frequently it is rare to get more than a few hours sleep at a time. The good news is that as your babies grow older they do start to sleep for longer.

Tamba has a whole host of [videos on sleep](#) from Professor Helen Ball which are essential watching. We also have a [factsheet on safe sleeping](#). The tips from the one parent community are to, “Sleep when your babies sleep and remember to eat too,” and to “Sleep at every chance you get.”

Don't be afraid to power-nap when your twins or triplets are sleeping during the day. Some parents will wake up both babies to feed them at the same time, others feed each multiple on demand. There is no right or wrong way but what is important is that you find a way that works for you and your babies - a way that allows you all to get some precious sleep.

“Sleep when your babies sleep and remember to eat too.”

“Sleep at every chance you get.”

## Help that parents received after birth of their multiples:

**72 PERCENT** 72% had help caring for their babies from family members.

39% had help with housework from family. **39 PERCENT**

**26 PERCENT** 26% had help caring for their babies from friends.

6% had help caring for their babies from neighbours. **6 PERCENT**

(Parents could choose more than one answer)

**8. Enjoy your babies - they aren't small for long.** There are challenges you will inevitably face as a one parent family, but being a multiple mum is a blessing.

As babies grow and develop, life and challenges do change and may become easier as your babies develop into wonderful little people, each with their own personality and their own likes and dislikes.

Many parents of multiples find that as their babies grow they will interact more with each other. And when they are older they develop their own relationship with each other which is amazing to watch as it develops.

Time really does fly though, and as one mum put it, “The days may drag at times, but the years they just fly by.”

“Stay strong - it gets easier.”

“Enjoy every moment, as it goes by so quickly.”

**9. Get out of the house.** Many of our parents are advocates for getting out in the fresh air each day. And certainly there are many health benefits to this for both you and your family.

You are less likely to feel isolated if you get out each day. Problems can seem more manageable after a good walk round the block, and both you and

the babies can work up an appetite in the fresh air.

There may be days when you cannot get out because of the weather, or maybe you or the babies have a cold. On these days you can always ask friends to pop round and if they bring dinner they will be extremely welcome. The important thing is not to get stuck in a rut of feeling overwhelmed and staying indoors because it feels easier. This can make you feel even more down.

If you are struggling with the logistics of getting out because you live in a flat or have older children that mean you need more pairs of hands to help then try organizing for a friend to help you. This can help you especially in the early days when you may not feel very confident about going out on your own. And if you are struggling financially with buying a buggy it is worth asking at your local children and families centre if there are any local charities that can help or they may be aware of local second hand selling sites.

Tamba have Helping Hands which is for families in crisis, be sure to check it out and see if you are eligible for support of some kind.

“You are less likely to feel isolated if you get out each day. Problems can seem more manageable after a good walk round the block.”

## Parents of multiples were asked how they fed their babies:

**39 PERCENT** 39% bottlefed exclusively.

36% used a mixture of breast milk and formula milk via a bottle. **36 PERCENT**

**16 PERCENT** 16% breastfed exclusively.





**10. Do it your way.** Finding a way that suits you and your babies is the key to coping.

Everyone will have an opinion and it's good to ask for advice and support, but trust that you will find a way that works for you and your family. You may not find it right away. You may find it and then your babies grow, going through a different phase and you feel like you've lost it briefly. But listen to your instincts and you will find the best way to deal with any new challenges.

You can only do your best and do it your way. As one of our parents put it, "It's OK to be good enough." Those are very wise words indeed.

“listen to your instincts and you will find the best way to deal with any new challenges.”

“It's OK to be good enough.”

### The survey asked one parent families if they had help at night / with night feeds:

**19**  
PERCENT

Only 19% said 'Yes' they had received help at night times.

79% said 'No' they had not received any help at night times.

**79**  
PERCENT

### One parent families of multiples were asked what things they found hardest to cope with:

**66**  
PERCENT

66% said they found lack of sleep or tiredness to be hard to cope with.

44% found it hard to cope with the loneliness.

**44**  
PERCENT

**38**  
PERCENT

Keeping up with housework was hard to cope with for 38% of respondents.

36% found it hard to cope because of financial problems.

**36**  
PERCENT

**38**  
PERCENT

38% of respondents found it difficult to get out of the house enough.

Feeling inadequate was something that 31% of lone parents found difficult to cope with.

**31**  
PERCENT

**31**  
PERCENT

General feelings of fear and worry were hard to cope with for 31% of respondents.

(Parents could choose more than one answer)

### HEAR WHAT OTHER ONE PARENT FAMILIES HAVE TO SAY

Tamba have put together a compilation of experiences that one parent families have had. One Parent Family Case Stories what lone parents have experienced in their own words and includes lots of useful advice.

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

To accompany this factsheet Tamba have produced One Parent Family FAQs with detailed answers to frequent questions.

### TAMBA'S ONE PARENT FAMILY FACEBOOK GROUP

TAMBA has a closed secret Facebook group for one parent families. It's open to both Tamba members and non-members. To join the group please email [louisebowman@tamba.org.uk](mailto:louisebowman@tamba.org.uk)

### OTHER GROUPS

**Gingerbread** - A charity that provides free advice, training and practical support for single parents. [www.gingerbread.org.uk](http://www.gingerbread.org.uk)

**Family Lives** - A national family support charity providing help and support in all aspects of family life. 5% of our families had used this charity. [www.familylives.org.uk/advice/your-family/single-parents](http://www.familylives.org.uk/advice/your-family/single-parents)

**Netmums** - A popular online resource for mums with local and national information. [www.netmums.com](http://www.netmums.com)

**Working Families** - A charity that helps parents, carers and their employers find a better balance between home and work. Tamba have developed a number of video clips with this charity on maternity rights and benefits which you can find on the Tamba website in the pregnancy section. [www.workingfamilies.org.uk](http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk)

Thank you for downloading our factsheet. Feedback from our user community is very important to Tamba. Please complete this survey to help us continue to ensure we meet the needs of our community:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Tambafactsheetfeedback>