

## Being a Grandparent to Twins, Triplets or More

Hearing you're going to become a grandparent to twins, triplets or more can be a bit of a shock. Some grandparents say they didn't quite know how to respond when they got the news. Hearing that you're going to be a grandparent to one child can be life-changing. Becoming a grandparent to two (or even three or four) grandchildren at the same time can lead to significant lifestyle adjustments for you as well as the parents. It is common to have dozens of questions flying round your head, not least of all, "How will they cope?" Followed by, "How can I help them?"

Hopefully this factsheet will help. It has been put together using top tips from those who know - grandparents of twins, triplets and more!

A multiple birth pregnancy is different from a singleton pregnancy right from the beginning as it is classed as a 'higher risk pregnancy'. The number of hospital appointments the mother-to-be is required to attend is higher; this will include additional ultrasound scans, consultant and midwife appointments and women pregnant with multiples grow bigger faster and sooner than women expecting just one baby.

By the beginning of the third trimester (28 weeks) most mothers-to-be are the size that mothers of singletons are at 40 weeks. As a result they are often much more tired, and find everyday tasks physically more difficult and draining much earlier in their pregnancy.

With a multiple birth pregnancy there can often be heightened emotions and worries and anxieties about how they will cope when the babies arrive. Another important point to note is that many twins and triplets arrive early - over 50% before 37 weeks.

For more information about multiple birth pregnancies you can download Tamba's ['Healthy Multiple Pregnancy Guide'](#) from our website.

Knowing that grandparents are a key part of the essential multiple parents' tool

kit for coping, we asked our community of grandparents to pass on their knowledge and experience in order to help other expectant grandparents. Here are their top tips:

### TOP TIPS FOR GRANDPARENTS OF TWINS TRIPLETS OR MORE

#### Tip 1 - Embrace and enjoy being a grandparent of multiples.

It is often said that becoming a grandparent is one of the joys of becoming older.

From our survey it was very clear that many respondents found being a grandparent of multiples very enjoyable. When asked how they felt about being a grandparent to multiples, responses included, "It's amazing," "It's a fantastic experience," "The love you feel is



**Tamba surveyed more than 330 grandparents of multiples in 2015.**

**The findings confirmed that grandparents are the key to support for parents of multiples, both during and after the pregnancy.**

overwhelming," "What a gift," and "The best experience ever - twice the work but twice the fun."

However not everyone embraces the challenge straight away. You may have worries about your own age, health and ability to cope, so take your time to work out how you can rise to the challenges ahead without over-committing yourself. As one grandparent said, "Don't be daunted by the prospect of twins - it's the most rewarding and joyful experience imaginable." And a grandparent to triplets said, "Although it was a very challenging time for us all, we got three times the joy."

## Tip 2 - Help and support the parents.

Help comes in many forms and is often welcomed when offered, both during the pregnancy and once the babies arrive. The type of help offered can come in lots of different forms including helping care for older grandchildren, assistance with housework, shopping, cooking meals etc. As one grandparent told us, "Never underestimate how much you are needed during those first months. My daughter had a one year old too at the time the twins arrived. Without additional help I am sure she would have been vulnerable to postnatal depression. Help and support from us, I believe, avoided this happening."

Many new parents can find it hard to ask for help so remember to be practical and suggest ways you might be able to help. New parents don't always realise how helpful an extra pair of hands can be and some may be reluctant to ask. As one grandparent put it, "Parents need a lot of reassurance and support to keep morale high through the early difficult days and nights." Other advice from grandparents includes:

“The initial support is very important, more so than after having just singletons.”

“Offer as much help as you can to the new parents, making the odd meal, taking older siblings for sleepovers so mum / dad can spend time with twins to get a routine sorted, and let them have the odd lie in at weekends.”

“If I had that time again I would have gone down to stay and help out more often, and for longer, in order to try and stave off the 'emergencies'. In my case I was afraid to be seen as an interfering mother-in-law even though my daughter-in-law never ever made me feel that way. Perhaps having a good discussion well before the birth would have ensured that that didn't happen and more appropriate help would have been provided sooner.”

Often it can be difficult to juggle the help that you want to give with the help that is needed. Communication is really

important here and some parents can find it hard to ask for help. It can therefore be a bit of a learning curve for all concerned. This can be especially true when new parents are sleep-deprived and anxious.

It is a good idea to talk to the parents about the type of help they would appreciate and the type of help you are able and would like to provide, before the births. This will give you all an opportunity to find common ground before everyone starts getting exhausted and emotional.

If you are unsure of what to offer, or feel hurt because your offers are rejected, you may want to talk to someone neutral outside the family. Tamba's helpline 'Twinline' is useful for anyone involved in the care of multiples. Twinline is open 365 days a year from 10am to 1pm and 7pm to

10pm. Just call 0800 138 0509 to talk to one of our trained volunteers.

## Tip 3 - Looking after twins, triplets or more is tiring and hard work.

There is no doubt that looking after twins, triplets or more can be hard work and will be very tiring. This is true not just for the parents, but also for the grandparents.

You may feel you want to help your son or daughter by babysitting their multiples, but at the same time be worried about how you will cope with the work, and maybe how you will cope physically with the demands.

Some grandparents offered their views on the reality of caring for their multiple-birth grandchildren:

“I found it difficult to take twin toddlers out and about because I found that whilst attending to one twin the other twin would escape.”

“The main difficulty now that I'm older is picking them up. Their Mum makes juggling two toddlers seem easy but I do struggle.”

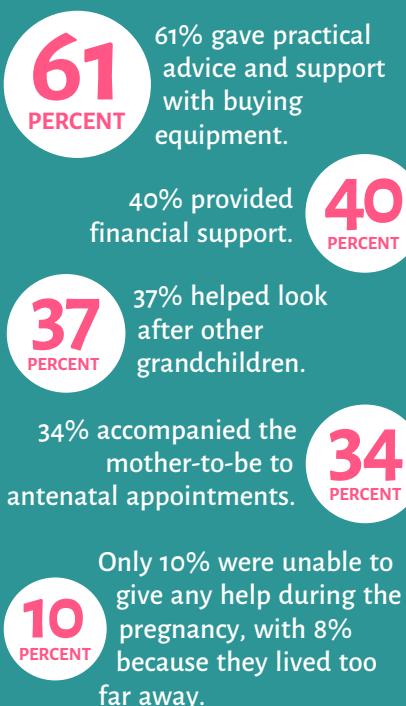
“Get in lots of rest when at your house, so you're able to help fully when you are at her house. You will be exhausted after a day at their's.”

The grandparents we spoke to gave some useful advice for how to cope with the difficulty that caring for twins, triplets or more can cause. In particular they emphasised the importance of setting boundaries and not letting yourself struggle too much, so that the help and support you give actually lasts longer into the future because you are not overwhelmed or too tired out.

“Do not take on too much. Then you can be realistic in the amount of care you can give your grandchildren over the years ahead. Ongoing support is vital.”

“Be clear about what you are able to offer, especially if you have other commitments e.g. work or if you have older parents to care for.”

## In our survey, grandparents of multiples were asked what help they were able to give their sons or daughters before the birth:



(Survey respondents could choose more than one answer for this question)

#### Tip 4 - Respect the parents' wishes.

Some Grandparents told us they had very strong views about how things should be done, especially as parenting will have changed since they were a parent. Attempts at providing support then became charged with emotion for all concerned, especially when opinions differ significantly.

The advice from our grandparent community is that it is vital to focus on the needs of all the children first and to provide support to the parents by following their lead on the way they want to parent their children. Even if this means the grandparents have to learn new ways to do things. As one grandparent said in their survey response "Don't ever suggest how they are doing things is wrong; they will find their feet. Do things how they ask you to, not how you think it should be done. They are their children, not yours. You can only advise."

It may be useful to read some of the resources available to new parents, to familiarise yourself with what the current trends and recommendations are surrounding pregnancy, birth and parenting generally as well as specifically multiples. There is lots of information on the Tamba website.

It is likely there will be many changes since you were in their position, but also many similarities as well. The chances are the biggest differences will be to do with their multiple birth status and this will be a steep and new learning curve for the whole family, parents and grandparents.

Whilst you may be eager to spend lots of time with your new grandchildren and want to help out, try and remember that the new family also need some time to work out a routine for themselves. Again good communication is vital. Another tip from your fellow grandparents is that



when you do help out it is important to aim to try and stick to the routine the parents have put in place.

“ Give as much help as you can and stand back to give the new parents some family time.”

“ Be prepared, both for the added work but also for the parent's anxiety over their multiples getting out of their routine.”

#### Grandparents of multiples were asked what Tamba resources they had used:

**18 PERCENT** 18% of grandparents had visited Tamba's website.

7% had visited the Tamba Facebook page. **7 PERCENT**

**7 PERCENT** 7% had read some of Tamba's booklets.

5% had attended one of our Practical Preparing for Parenthood regional seminars. **5 PERCENT**

**1 PERCENT** Only 1% had phoned 'Twinline' - Tamba's telephone helpline - available to anyone caring for multiples.

(Survey respondents could choose more than one answer for this question)

#### Tip 5 - Treat each child as an individual.

Arguably one of the most important roles a grandparent can have is simply to spend time with your grandchildren. This is especially true as they grow older and begin to display their own individual personalities, strengths, likes and dislikes. As some of our grandparents said, "Get to know them

as individuals, not as one of a pair, from the very start," and "Treat them as individuals; don't expect them to be the same and like the same things and want to do the same things just because they are twins."

Developing individuality is a very important aspect of personal development for twins, triplets or more and there are lots of ways grandparents can help the family to achieve this. Take a look at the resources on our website to support the development of individuality in multiples.

The care of twins, triplets or more often focuses on a routine simply to get everything done, but this can leave less time to tend to each child's individual differences. This is especially true for families with twins, triplets or more, because their parents usually have limited time available to give each child individual attention.

As a grandparent you can really help to ensure that each child gets the individual attention they need. You can get to have fun without worrying (as much) about the mundane tasks that the parents face every day. By giving each baby attention you can get to know their individual personalities, likes and dislikes.

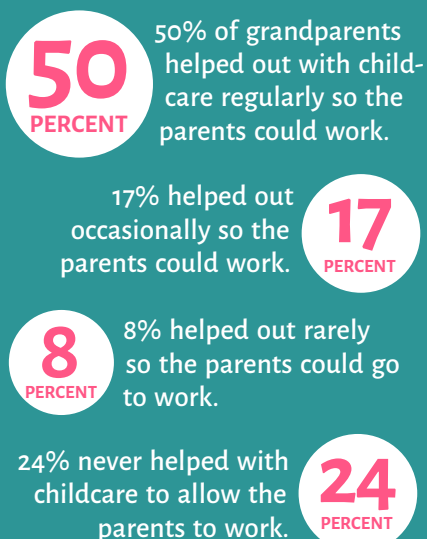
Here's what a couple grandparents had to say about this:

“ Try to have both grandparents around when babysitting as the children are individuals and often want to do separate things.”

“ They are very much individual personalities. Recently we have been having one at a time for sleepovers. We feel this has benefitted everyone - one less at home and, for the child, grandma's and grandpa's undivided attention.”

However, in all the joy of the new arrivals it is very important to remember any older siblings in the family. They suddenly go from being the centre of attention to having to share the attention with not one but two or more new brothers or sisters. Grandparents can be a huge help in this area of family life too.

## Grandparents of multiples were asked if they helped out with childcare so the parents could go to work:



### Tip 6 - Stay calm!

New babies can create stress in any household and the arrival of several new babies at once can be even more stressful.

Our grandparent community told us that the best way of dealing with the added stress and workload that twins, triplets or more often bring with them, is to try very hard to remain calm. Whilst this might be easier said than done, it is a tip repeated often by grandparents and parents.

Being patient with yourself is vital, as often even routine tasks with multiples can take longer than expected. Most situations, no matter how overwhelming, can seem a little easier if you pause to take a deep breath, step back and calm down.

Tips from fellow grandparents include looking at the 'problem' logically and as a 'challenge'. They advise dividing tasks into smaller chunks and doing them in order of priority, one at a time.

The ability to stay calm in a crisis not only helps you to cope with caring for your grandchildren, but can be invaluable when the overtired parents

are having a particularly difficult time. It's also not only the parents who can pick up on, and take some comfort from, a more relaxed atmosphere. The babies will sense this too and will hopefully be a little calmer themselves.

“They're just children. Don't be scared by the fact there's more than one. One at a time works just fine.”

“Keep calm when they all cry at once and try to stick with the routine.”

“Try not to worry too much, or if you do, don't let the parents know.”

### Tip 7 - Be Organised

One of the best ways to make sure you have the ability to remain calm is to be prepared for any eventuality, and this begins with good organisation.

Several of our grandparents said to 'baby proof everything!' And try to create a sort of home from home environment at your home so that when your grandchildren visit, you don't have to worry about things getting broken, or them getting hurt.

Plan ahead and prepare for any possibilities that could cause a stressful situation. For example, keep a few spare nappies or a change of clothes for the babies that you can whip out in an emergency. The same tip is useful if you are visiting them or going to stay.

Grandparents told us that packing spare clothes, comfy clothes and shoes and other useful items you might need helped reduce their stress levels. Being in a household with two or more tiny babies who feed and sleep in two to three hourly cycles can be tiring for all concerned so try to rest up before you go and visit because you may get only limited rest or sleep once you're there.

Here are a few of tips from fellow grandparents:

“Keep all your essentials packed in a case. Add clothes for comfort when you are going to help out. Remember your chargers for phones and cameras as theirs might be run down.”

“Routine - ask parents to write down as far as possible the routine they are trying to follow with the babies. Make notes of medication amounts, telephone contacts etc.”

“Be prepared for the unexpected! Be organised - have everything you need to hand and try to enlist the help and support of friends and family.”

### Tip 8 - Look after yourself.

When you become a grandparent, you will obviously be significantly older than when you became a parent. Whilst it is natural to want to help the parents as much as you can, it is important that you acknowledge your personal limitations and remember to look after yourself as well.

Young children are full of energy and with twins, triplets or more this is multiplied! Feedback from our grandparent community told us that they often found it tiring looking after their multiple grandchildren. Some found that this was compounded by other personal issues such as ill health, or having the responsibilities of other commitments such as work or elderly parents to care for.

Being clear about how much you can realistically help is vital, and don't be afraid to say if you need to slow things down a little or enlist an extra pair of hands to help you out when caring for your grandchildren. Whilst the new parents will appreciate any help you can give them, they will not want it to be at your own detriment. So try not to let your own day-to-day chores and important tasks such as appointments go undone or unattended.

By pacing yourself realistically you can make sure you are around to help and in good health for as long as

67% of grandparents who responded to our survey had other grandchildren as well as their multiples.

possible so you can carry on with your key role as grandparent to multiples for many years to come.

Here are some tips from other grandparents:

“ Try to be as fit and healthy as possible - you will need the energy!”

“ Just hope you are a grandparent at an earlier age because you need heaps of energy, and at 65 years I am worried I will not have the energy for too many years help.”

“ Make sure you still reserve some time for yourselves.”

“ Be clear about what you are able to offer, especially if you have other commitments e.g. work or older parents to care for.”

#### Tip 9 - Be flexible and open-minded.

Flexibility and open mindedness were skills that our grandparents thought were important. You may already have an idea about what life with multiples might be like but reality can be very different. Every child and every family is unique.

Sometimes the parents might have to make choices which aren't the path you would have personally chosen. Many multiples come with additional considerations and situations that will require difficult decisions parents of singletons might not encounter. These can include decisions during pregnancy, premature delivery of the babies and even hospital stays.

Once the babies arrive families can find that they become isolated because of difficulties leaving the house with more than one baby or they can face financial and work difficulties due to the incredibly high cost of childcare for two or more young children at once.

As the grandparent you may have to sit back and watch your children struggle and make difficult decisions. An important role is to listen to their concerns and then support whatever path they choose and be ready to help in whatever way you can, with whatever situation arises.

“ I really was open to anything happening and took it a day at a time.”

“ Be prepared for a steep learning curve.”

“ It was a learning process for me as we went along, which was not a problem. Childcare has moved on in so many ways.”

“ Just be ready to help wherever needed but allow the parents to do as much as they want and can do for themselves.”

#### Tip 10 - Be prepared to learn.

From the moment you find out your son or daughter is expecting twins, triplets or more, there will be a continual opportunity for learning. If you try and embrace this new situation, new identity and new role in your child's life, it will make for a most rewarding experience.

From a 'high risk' pregnancy, caring for two or more babies, new childcare practices, what the role of a grandparent means to you and your family, down to literal things like medical terms and procedures for premature babies, you will be learning and adapting to this unpredictable life changing event.

Many things you will find you are learning by experience, right alongside your own child. Other things you may have to sit back and let your child, (or another grandparent or a doctor / nurse) teach you.

Here's what other grandparents had to say about their learning journey on the road to becoming a multiples grandparent:

“ Your own experience of being a mother of 'singletons' is hardly ever going to translate to twins! That's ok. You're all learning together. You're there to support and encourage and listen.”

“ Realise, if premature, that you are actually getting them to their expected birth date and not to worry about them being a little behind in their development.”

“ It's only when you meet a new situation on a daily basis that you always wish you knew more than you did! I was glad that my daughter made me aware of TAMBA and pointed me towards sources of information. We were both learning at the same time”



## HEAR WHAT OTHER GRANDPARENTS OF MULTIPLES HAVE TO SAY

To accompany this factsheet, Tamba have put together a compilation of stories from other grandparents of twins, triplets or more. 'Grandparents' Personal Stories' features lots of experiences from grandparents written in their own words, and includes lots more useful advice.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

Also accompanying this factsheet are Tamba's FAQs for grandparents of twins, triplets or more. It features detailed answers to frequently asked questions.

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>

# FAQs for Grandparents of Twins, Triplets or More!

Answers to frequent questions asked by grandparents of twins, triplets or more. You should also read Tamba's factsheet, [Being a Grandparent to Twins, Triplets or More](#) and [Grandparents' Personal Stories](#) that we produced along with these FAQs.

## FAQ 1 - What can I do to prepare for the arrival of my grandchildren?

With all the talk of learning as you go along and from experience, you might wonder what you can do now to help prepare you for the arrival of your grandchildren? The key to being ready is to gather as much information and sources of support as you can for yourself as well as the parents-to-be and your grandchildren, before they arrive.

You could get in touch with other grandparents of multiples and go along to antenatal or special multiples groups with your son / daughter before the birth. At the request of our grandparent community, Tamba are developing a secret Facebook group for grandparents, so if you'd like to join this group, contact [louisebowman@tamba.org.uk](mailto:louisebowman@tamba.org.uk) for details.

**“Contact TAMBA and accept all help when offered. Attend any coffee mornings with other grandparents.”**

It may also be useful preparation to get yourself fit and healthy and try to sort out the important things in your own life that you may have been putting off. That way there is less to worry about in the early days after your grandchildren arrive. Practical things like buying a few baby essentials either for your own home when the grandchildren visit or to give to the parents is also great preparation.

**“Seek out information about twins and multiples and family issues around having twins and multiples, e.g. using Tamba publications, books, websites etc.”**

**“Learn as much as you can about multiple births before their arrival. Also learn about the possibility of them being premature and the Special Care Baby Unit because it can be a scary time and if you are prepared you might be better able to support your son / daughter.”**



## FAQ 2 - I've heard multiple birth pregnancies are high risk - is that true?

A multiple pregnancy is classed as more high risk than a single pregnancy, so the expectant mother will be attending more hospital appointments than if she were expecting one baby. The mother will be regularly and closely monitored, as the pregnancy progresses, by a range of healthcare professionals. Useful information is available from the NHS in their [NICE Guidelines for Multiple](#)

[Pregnancy](#) which give more details about what you can expect. It's also worth reading [Tamba's Healthy Multiple Pregnancy Guide](#).

It might be helpful, if the mother is happy with the idea, to attend some of her appointments with her, especially if problems arise and a difficult pregnancy and birth are anticipated.

It will be useful to become as informed as possible about the progress of the pregnancy, so that you can try and remain calm to support the parents who may be very worried. Often there is a lot of information to take in and decisions to be made, so it may be helpful to attend with the mother if the partner cannot be present.

Some hospitals run special twin and triplet antenatal courses, which are another great source of information. Not all hospitals run these special antenatal courses but Tamba run a variety of courses right across the UK. The most popular is the regional two-hour seminar called [Practical Preparing for Parenthood](#) which is run by trained facilitators who are all parents of twins or triplets themselves. This course is also run as an online webinar. Details can be found on [our website](#).

If you do not attend any of these courses or appointments, make a point of asking the parents-to-be about all the information they have been told. Not only will it demonstrate an interest, it will improve your understanding and may well help them to consolidate the information and come to decisions themselves.

### FAQ 3 - We live quite a distance from our grandchildren-to-be, how can we still be involved and supportive?

However you decide to keep in touch, as a long-distance grandparent you will need the help of your own children to make this possible. Discuss your concerns and ask for their help and cooperation in maintaining a close relationship with your grandchildren.

Your grandchildren are being born into the era of technology and will likely be taught at an increasingly young age to use computers and tablets, mobile phones, interactive television, the internet and various other techy things. Naturally one of the best ways to keep in touch when you live a long distance from your family is to utilise this technology! Mobile phones and webcams now provide live video chat capacity so you can see your grandchildren when talking to them. Children are owning (or able to use their parents) mobile phones at an increasingly younger age. Use this to your advantage and phone them at a time you know they will be able to chat to you, for example when you know they will be in the car on the way back from a club!

If you are not sure or confident about how to use these types of devices, I'm sure your children might be able to teach you, or there are various free courses in which you can learn and improve your confidence. Beyond Skype and digital photos and the routine 'how was your day' messages, you can interact more fully with your grandchildren by doing things like playing online card or board games with them.



Don't underestimate the power of a letter for staying in touch with older grandchildren! Not only will they be excited to receive their very own letters, but it will also be really helpful for improving their education, giving them a chance to practice spelling, writing and handwriting whilst developing a special relationship with you. Of course these letters can also be exchanged via email along with photos, virtual greeting cards and other little things which keep communication open and help build a warm and loving relationship between you and your grandchildren.

If you live a long way away then you might find it better to arrange longer stays when you can visit. Some grandparents have even still managed to provide regular childcare whilst living a long distance away!

**“ I feel like I lead two lives. My grandchildren live too far away to travel to daily, so I stay over a few days each week. I have done this since the start and it works well for us all.”**

If regular visits really are not an option, it might be possible to arrange a family holiday annually or to meet in the middle between your two homes? However much you see them or don't, the most important thing is to make the most of any time and communication you do have with your grandchildren.

### FAQ 4 - Why is it so important to treat twins, triplets or more as individuals?

It is important to treat twins, triplets or more as individuals because... they are individuals!

Non-identical multiples are no more similar than any other sibling pair; they simply share a birthday. Identical twins or triplets might share DNA and look incredibly similar but they usually develop very different personalities including their preferences, their skills and their temperaments too.

Offering choices to each child is very important and allows them to develop their own likes and dislikes. When they are small, choices such as what clothes to wear, or which toy they want to play with, encourages independence and individuality. You may find they choose exactly the same things! Or they may not! As they grow older, it can also be used as a very useful tool to disperse jealously and unhealthy levels of competition if each child has developed their own sense of self and has gone down their own path.

Being a twin or triplet and sharing throughout your life can be challenging. Here at Tamba we believe that children and families should be supported in helping their multiples develop opportunities for individuality. There is more information on this on our [website](#). Each child must be given the opportunity to grow up and enjoy the journey of self-discovery and self reliance.

Twins are often said to have a very special bond, but that doesn't mean they have to do everything together. In the same way that couples do not have to spend every moment together. It is often good for twins, triplets or more to have experiences on their own and then come back together afterwards to share these experiences with their sibling(s).

Mums and Dads of multiples may have limited time to give one-to-one attention to each child. So an important role of a grandparent of multiples could be to spend more one-to-one time with each grandchild. You could have one child at a time over to stay, giving you special time with just them, whilst allowing the parents to have more individual time with the other child / children.

Here are some tips from grandparents of multiples on individuality:

**“ Try not to label them as twins so that their individuality shines through. Make sure that their older sister/s and brother/s still have special times with you. And love 'em all loads for who they are!”**

“ Treat them as individuals but realise at times they will want the same thing. Getting the balance right is not always straightforward.”

“ Don't favour one above the other, though this applies to parents and grandparents of more than one child, regardless of twins etc. Enjoy them and celebrate their individuality, but also celebrate their twinness.”



## LINKS TO OTHER SOURCES OF SUPPORT AND INFORMATION

Here are a range of additional sources of information and support for grandparents of twins, triplets or more:

### Grannynet

This is the definitive website for grandmothers. Here you'll find trusted advice and friendly chat, combining modern knowledge with traditional values.

[www.grannynet.co.uk](http://www.grannynet.co.uk)

### Age UK - computer training courses

Age UK offer free computer training courses that may come in useful for keeping in touch with your children and your grandchildren.

[www.ageuk.org.uk/work-and-learning/technology-and-internet/computer-training-courses](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/work-and-learning/technology-and-internet/computer-training-courses)

### Family Lives

Family Lives offer support and advice for parents and families including grandparents.

[www.familylives.org.uk/advice/your-family/stepfamilies/stepfamilies-and-the-wider-family/grandparents-and-stepfamilies](http://www.familylives.org.uk/advice/your-family/stepfamilies/stepfamilies-and-the-wider-family/grandparents-and-stepfamilies)

### Grandparents Plus

A national charity which champions the vital role of grandparents and the wider family in children's lives - especially when they take on the caring role in difficult family circumstances.

[www.grandparentsplus.org.uk](http://www.grandparentsplus.org.uk)

### The Grandparents' Association

A national charity which supports all grandparents and their families. They not only celebrate the joys of grandparenting, but their helpline and their expert advice is there to help you, whatever your problem.

[www.grandparents-association.org.uk](http://www.grandparents-association.org.uk)

Remember that you can also call **Tamba's Twinline** on 0800 138 0509. Twinline is Tamba's free telephone helpline open 365 days a year from 10am to 1pm and 7pm to 10pm. Twinine's trained volunteers are there to listen and support parents, grandparents and anyone caring for twins, triplets or more. All our volunteers are parents of twins or triplets themselves.



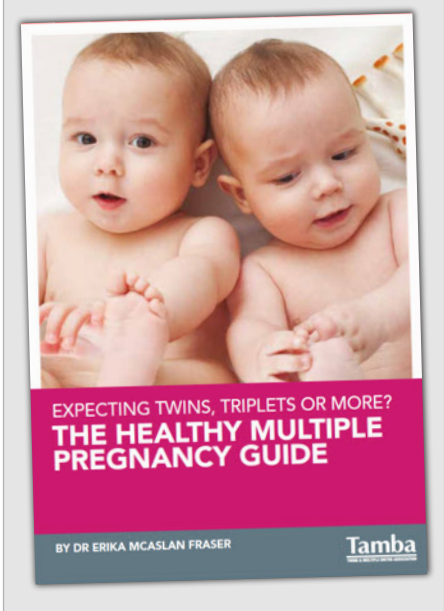
## GRANDPARENTS' FACTSHEET

These FAQs accompany Tamba's factsheet for grandparents of multiples. It contains top tips that will help with your twins, triplets or more.

## HEAR WHAT OTHER GRANDPARENTS OF MULTIPLES HAVE TO SAY

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### The Healthy Multiple Pregnancy Guide



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## Grandparents' Personal Stories

Grandparents of multiples share their personal experiences below. You should also read our [Being a Grandparent to Twins, Triplets or More](#) factsheet and our [Grandparents' FAQs](#) that Tamba produced along with these personal stories.

### Janet Bugden, Nana to 20 month-old twins, shares her tips for being a grandparent to twins:

I'm Nana to my son and his wife's three lovely children. Their older son is three and the twins are twenty months. I have two older grandchildren as well.

My biggest challenge, personally, as a grandparent? Well a challenge either gets the better of us and stops us in our tracks, or it alters our course. For me, retired early from teaching special needs children, and now suffering with anxiety issues and heart problems, the challenge was just what I needed. There was no choice; I had to rise to the occasion.

So I armed myself with all the books and information I could lay my hands on, all of my own experience that I could draw on, and all that I knew I had in me. Knowledge is a powerful thing.

Long before the twins arrived, as their mummy got bigger and bigger (and the summer got hotter and hotter) I would often spend a day with them, from 7am in the morning when daddy went off to work, until 6pm in the evening. I took meals to stock the fridge, helping out with housework where I could and loading washing machines etc. so that mum could spend time with her little lad.

Often they would come to my house and I tried to provide a home-from-home. I had all the equipment that might be needed for a toddler (as the older child then was) from potties to drink cups, all manner of toys and

games, stair-gates and a high-chair. Mum could pop her little lad into the car without a second thought, not worrying if she'd forgotten anything.

When the twins arrived the routine continued. I'd be there when needed, not necessarily to cuddle a baby, but to get on with the jobs round their house, to help keep to baby routines, to play with whoever needed playing with, scooping up crying babies, making cups of coffee and providing tins full of baking - intended for the family, but often devoured by other visitors.

Now visits to 'Nana's house' meant having microwave sterilisers, bottle warmers, baby mats, and baby rockers (times two), toys to cater for everyone and kitchen cupboard locks; these children are all over the place! Time went on and I was making puréed food ready to stock their freezer rather than home-made meals to stock their fridge.

So my tip to other grandparents of twins - make your home a home-from-home; a haven and oasis for mum and dad, knowing everything is at the ready and there's support on hand for the children. The family can come at a moments notice, and often do!

For the children it's the certainty of Nana's house; everything is as it should be and where it always is. They can find their own toys, books etc. and get stuck in. They're all completely different little characters so collecting the toys and books that they will be able to play with together is a challenge in itself, but so much fun. (Thankfully there's a huge market for selling things on again when you're finished with them!) Certainty for the older sibling as well, after all he knows the ropes and is very much in

charge of proceedings. Plenty of time reserved just for him - special times for a story and a cuddle.

Whatever else may happen in their lives, Nana and 'Nana's House' - they're a sure thing.

### Vanessa Guagenti, Nonna to 16 month-old identical twin girls, tells us how being local has helped her support her daughter and grandchildren:



I'm a grandmother known as Nonna (my husband is Italian) to identical twin girls who are 16 months old and they are our younger daughter's first children.

We live very close by to our daughter and this is a godsend as we are needed for both help with the babies and emotional support for her.

When our daughter first broke the news to us, after her twelve week scan, that she was expecting twins and identical ones at that, I was overjoyed

and shell-shocked all in one go!

Then the elation seeped away a little when she began to explain the difficulties that could arise during an identical twin pregnancy, the worst being the Twin to Twin Transfusion Syndrome (TTTS) which, very briefly, is where one twin donates their blood to the other and this is equally dangerous to both babies. This can only affect identical twins. However, the percentage of this happening is only about 15%.

Unfortunately TTTS did present itself in about the 28th week of her pregnancy and, because of this, the girls were born by C-section at 31 weeks. However, I am very pleased to report that after a difficult first few weeks, two bundles of joy joined the family!

As grandmother I play an important part in both my daughter's and the twins' lives, giving both physical and emotional support. Twins are hard work and sleep-deprivation for the parents is probably one of the hardest things they have to cope with and as a grandmother I am there to step in with help and advice when the going gets tough, and sometimes even staying over to give the husband some sleep as he has to work!

It was all a bit scary at first but it's amazing how all the old instincts come tumbling back and you become a dab hand again at nappy-changing and rocking babies to sleep. Mastering the new state-of-the-art pushchair was a feat in itself, but now I am a whiz with it!

I now look after the girls two days a week, as my daughter has returned to work part time. It is hard work but I can honestly say it is worth every moment and I feel so proud walking down the street pushing the pushchair and enjoying all the admiring smiles and comments which twins inevitably bring.

I would just like to finish by saying that despite all of the hard work, being the grandmother of twins is the most rewarding and wonderful experience.

As they get older and their personalities emerge, the joy of seeing them interact and play with each other is wonderful.

## Jill Tatham, Grandma to 18 month-old twins, tells us how twins are twice the effort and more than twice the fun:

Twins are twice the effort, but much more than twice the fun! And the more you help, the closer the bond, which is just fantastic.

Now the twins are 18 months old, walking, talking and very entertaining - one advantage of multiples of course is that they often entertain each other, which everyone really appreciates - and the (now) four year-old enjoys playing with them too.

I was surprised that my daughter and son-in-law had under-estimated the amount of help they would need with the twins, in spite of having a fairly demanding two year-old already. I was older and wiser and cancelled all my voluntary work for fifteen months so that I could help them all - the two year-old took much of my time early on. I greatly admire parents of multiples who have to manage alone.

From the day they were born we all made sure that we always spoke to each of the twins individually, with eye contact, and called them by name every time. They responded to their names amazingly early.

I happen to be small, never strong, and was already 67, so I had to work at keeping myself fit and be careful about lifting. A 'crook' grandma is no use at all! After about nine months of really hard work things started to get easier - walking helped enormously - and the fun began!

When the twins were about 15 months old I was very pleased to hear my daughter say she actually felt sorry for parents of singles, because it must be so boring!

## Marguerite Palmer tells us how even her experience as a midwife didn't prepare her for the constant care twins require:



When my daughter phoned from New York to say she was pregnant but having 'awful' morning sickness I laughed and said, "don't worry you are either laying down a good placenta or you are having twins."

We welcomed our first grandchildren Michael and William, identical twin boys, born in London, who are now three years-old. We were prepared for premature babies as they were delivered at 36 weeks by caesarean.

Michael's first few days were spent in intensive care and William, who was jaundiced and although with Mum, was in an incubator under an infrared light.

Amy's determination to breastfeed both was admirable and meant long walks to the NICU.

I should say I am a trained midwife but, gosh, I never realised how constant the care of twins is. Where did the days go? Yes, of course they did spend most of their time sleeping but then there is so much to do!

For the first year of their lives I travelled to London, Monday to Thursday, to help and it was sheer joy to be involved in their care. I believe firmly that the bond I have with them was fostered during those early days. I am 'Grannie', and the 'ie' at the end is to distinguish from their other 'Granny'.

My advice to any new grandparents of twins is firstly learning how the equipment works, especially the pram. Practice putting it together and up and down; it is an engineering feat. Secondly encourage breastfeeding at the same

time, but reassure the Mum that topping up with expressed milk can help share the work. Even if one twin is sleeping it doesn't hurt to wake them for dual care.

Finally do whatever is needed without fuss and keep reassuring the parents and the babies that they are all doing fine (babies love being talked to). Bite that tongue if necessary, because the parents get very, very tired.

They are now in Edinburgh and 'Face Time' is the saviour for me. They tell me their news, show me their gardening, drawings, toys and books and always ask to see their favourite items in our house. We send them postcards from wherever we are in the world on holiday and these are kept in their boxes so hopefully when they are older they will be interested in places and stamps.

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### **Libby Mesquitta, Grandy to twin girls, started a baby fund to help her daughter:**



When I found out my daughter was pregnant I bought a 'Baby Fund' money box for her. A few weeks later she rang and told me I had better buy another one as she was expecting twins! I screamed in delight - such a wonderful, exciting bonus.

Our non-identical granddaughters were born eight weeks early after my daughter went into labour, and weighed 3lbs 12oz and 3lbs 13oz - such tiny little things but so adorable. They stayed in hospital for only three weeks and the care they and their Mum and Dad received at Kingston Hospital was amazing.

They are now approaching two years

old and are fun loving, happy little girls who seem to love seeing us (their Grandy and Papa). It has been such a privilege to watch them developing and to see their interaction with each other. They egg each other on and if one does something she shouldn't the other one immediately follows suit! They talk to each other and play together really well - most of the time. When one is hurt though the other one gets quite upset.

It has been hard work, especially when they were tiny, but their Mum and Dad are a great team and my husband and I have lived near enough to be able to help out if needed.

Bath-time, when they were babies, was quite challenging and tiring but is now a fun (although quite damp!) experience.

I thought it might be difficult to give the girls equal attention but it has actually been easy even when trying to read to them both sitting on my knee. This may possibly get more of a problem as they get bigger!

Going out with them to the park or zoo needs having eyes in the back of your head as they do tend to go off in opposite directions sometimes. Reins are a must when they aren't in their buggy!

I had never had anything to do with twins before but it is an amazing and joyous experience and I feel so blessed to have them in my life.

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### **Linda Davies, Nanny to boy-girl twins aged two, shares how life changed when twins arrived:**

The day I got the phone call from my daughter saying, "Help Mum, It's Twins!" we knew life would never be the same again. What a shock! There aren't any twins in our family history. I was already Nanny to her two year-old son and very soon I would have two extra little people to love and help care for.

My daughter was induced at 38 weeks and in just an hour and with just gas and air (a positive, you do hear



some horror stories) our beautiful babies arrived - a boy and a girl. I was thrilled to be at the birth along with the babies Daddy. Beware, we had bought tiny baby clothes but as they were both around 7lbs they didn't fit!

In the days that followed life seemed like a constant whirl of feeding, changing nappies, washing and drying clothes and finding ways to manage two babies. It was also important to make sure our little two year-old didn't feel left out. It was hard work and as I was living with my daughter at the time I can remember falling into bed most nights exhausted and aching all over, but at least I didn't have to get up for the night feeds! Just a tip - if one baby wakes up to feed in the night my daughter woke the other and fed them too otherwise you are up all night!

Weaning them proved really easy, messy but easy and although you are probably advised not to, one spoon and one bowl makes life easier.

They are now almost 18 months old and very mobile. I wish I could say life is easier but in my daughters words, "It is a bit like herding two little drunk people home from the pub." They totter around, never go in the same direction (unless they see the dishwasher open) and are always falling over and bumping into things.

Despite this, what a special joy they are. Both are very different. Our boy loves cars, trains and tracks and follows his big brother everywhere, usually into

mischievous and with no fear, and our little girl is a princess who loves to dance, talk to herself in the mirror and play quietly with her toys.

We have found that it is worth teaching them to climb the stairs as early as you can and how to come back down safely. We have stair gates but as they are getting heavier carrying them up and down is a struggle for me. Could I have prepared myself in anyway? I am not sure. We have all learnt along the way and I am certainly more confident looking after them by myself now.

It has been invaluable to keep in as much of a routine as possible but with two little ones, to quote one of my daughters' sayings, "Some days you just have to put on your boots and dance."

I would not change things for the world.

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## Patricia Higgins shares her experience of being a grandmother to identical twin boys:

I am a grandparent to identical twin boys aged 2½ years old. Jacob and Calan are the third and fourth children of my daughter Katherine's. She has a 15 year old daughter, Melissa, and 10 year old son, Luke.

I am called Pawpaw, as my daughter's older children are dual heritage Chinese British. I was much younger when Melissa was born and did not want to be called Gran or Nan but rather liked the Chinese term for maternal grandmother. So the younger children also call me Pawpaw (or as Calan can manage 'Gawgaw').

It was great surprise to find out that Katherine was having twins, as there are no twins in the family, and totally unexpected (as it is for so many). We looked forward to the boys' arrival with great excitement.

It was a hard birth as there were two of them, and Jacob was struggling to come into the world so Katherine had to have a caesarean section, which she was very disappointed about.

There have been many challenging times caring for the boys, as gorgeous as they are. They are very demanding, not the best sleepers (currently waking at 5 am on a regular basis), insist on going their own way, usually in opposite directions, and the 'terrible twos' prevail. When we take them to public events e.g. friends' wedding and recently to watch my performance in a choral concert at the Liverpool Philharmonic hall, the boys' behaviour has been loud, demanding and difficult to manage, necessitating in my daughter having to take them out of the venue.

The biggest thing I have learned is how to support my daughter to ignore the ignorant few who turn and stare and make her feel uncomfortable and like a 'poor' mother, which she certainly is not. She is a fantastic mother who juggles the needs of all four of her children.

I've also learned how it is important for the parents and grandparents of twins to support each other through the challenging times, because it is so much harder with two. I also offer practical support by having the boys overnight once a week so that Katherine and her husband manage to get a night's sleep.

They are of course a joy, very funny and very loving (when not tantruming). They grow and change daily. They can be demanding and often tend to prefer me as I find it hardest to say, "no," to them. You'd think I would know better, but as a grandparent I have greater patience than I did when my children were young, and I was working, and trying to do everything else, and be everything to everyone. I also can give them back and have plenty of recovery time, which my daughter does not, so I enjoy my time with the boys and my other grandchildren 'cos it doesn't half go fast and before you know it they are teenagers.

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## Tony Friedlander, grandfather to twin girls, shares a grandfather's viewpoint:

We live in Colchester and have one married daughter, who moved to Devon eight years ago. We sold our business in 2005 so when she became pregnant in 2010, we secretly bought a flat near her, as we knew she would wish to return to work after the first year. When her daughter was born in April 2011, she and her husband were paranoid about sterilising everything; using packets of wet-wipes by the ton and panicking if the baby should pick up a speck of dirt from the floor. We told them it would be different when the second came along. They disagreed, but then twin girls arrived in December 2013 and there was precious little time to be so fussy.

We are spending far more time in Devon than we envisaged as her husband now works away all over the UK or at his Surrey head office several days every week.

The pressures on her are simply enormous as she has again had to return to work part-time in a highly pressurised job she luckily enjoys. So she now has a day nanny three days a week, but even so, we also get called upon more and more, as we know she feels guilty not spending enough time with the children, but I do resent it when she is very short-tempered with both of us but we have to keep schtum, which I find very hard.

The twins are lovely but especially challenging, very noisy, and they copy everything their four year-old sister does and are into everything.

The other grandparents help out when they can but not as much as we do, and at the age of 70 I feel torn as I feel my own life is slipping away. My wife wants to move permanently to Devon, which has caused a huge strain on our own relationship as I do not, especially if son-in-law ever gets promoted again.

Now I am retired I want to travel but it is impossible to fit it in, although we both manage to play some golf, tennis and bridge in Devon (I get more chance than my wife). Otherwise I am cooped

up in a flat whilst the house and garden in Colchester, which I love since we have completely modernised it, is increasingly neglected, as is our own social life.

At times I admit do get very depressed as I do feel trapped - this may sound selfish, but we both worked incredibly hard and long hours for many years and I have had heart problems and am acutely aware that will pass this way only once.

Ironically, I was adopted by a much older woman, never had grandparents and neither did my wife, so am pleased we can give our daughter much-needed support, but just wish it wasn't so full on.

I say all this not out of self-pity but to show the other side of the coin.

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## Chris and Mick Riches share their experience of being Ma-Ma and Pop to twin girls:

We are grandparents known as Ma-Ma and Pop to twin girls Hollie and Emilia. They are ten month-old non-identical twins and the first children of our daughter and son in law.

When the girls came home from hospital I offered to stay for two weeks or for however long Emma and Rob wanted me. I ended up staying and helping for two months!

New parents think they know how hard it will be, but it's the sleepless nights that seem to be the worst thing. I was there to help, but mostly to reassure them. I did not want to take over and then leave them feeling they did not know what to do. I said what I thought may be a good thing to try but also asked them what they thought they should do.

I didn't need to worry as their instincts were almost always right. The girls firstly slept in 'Moses' baskets separately, but after five months they did not settle so well so we tried them in one cot, and that worked well. At six months they went in to their own

cots in the nursery with both cots pushed together, so they could see each other and touch if they wanted.

Hollie had colic for the first few months and this was hard for us all. She would cry for ages before going off to sleep. If you find you are not coping well with this please always ask for help, never feel you should be able to cope. No sleep and a constant crying baby is hard, and it's easy to start to feel you're not coping, knowing you also have the other one to feed and deal with. I know as my first child had colic and projectile vomiting, but with help it soon passes. He is now 35 and none the worse for his ailments! We have the girls to stay and give their parents a break, and love making baby food for them. It keeps us out of mischief!

Our daughter has gone back to work three days a week and the girls come and stay. It is hard but the two of us love taking them out. A trip just to the shops takes ages as everyone wants to talk and ask about them; luckily we have the time and love to show them off.

We still help at their home if asked, and love every moment of it. So enjoy them while you can - they soon grow up.

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## Fiona Print, Grandma to identical twins Joel and Evan, and their older sister Abigail:

I am 'Grandma' to my daughter Sarah's and her husband David's three children, Abigail, aged five, and identical twins Joel and Evan, aged three.

The day I picked up my office phone to hear Sarah telling me that she had just had her twelve week scan and was expecting twins, was the day I had to decide whether to take retirement or not. Decision made - the boys were MCMA twins and therefore would necessarily be born by Caesarean section at 32 weeks followed by a spell in special care. Since Abigail was only just two years old we felt that I should be around

a lot for a couple of months before the boys were born to provide a consistent, stable figure for Abigail when it was time for the birth and the weeks following.

This worked really well for Abigail (although involved me commuting weekly from Lancashire to London!) and she accepted the boys into her life without feeling left out or upset, despite Sarah and David being in and out of the hospital with the boys.

I continued staying with the family regularly for the months that followed. My daughter went back to work as a school teacher when the boys were one year old and I offered to help look after the children while Sarah was at work.

Initially I was quite lonely but when I started to go to playgroups etc. I realised how many grandparents there were helping out with childcare, many travelling quite long distances and staying over for a night or two every week. I was the only one looking after twins though!

Things I've learnt as a grandparent of multiples: You are an essential support to their parents. My being so closely involved with daily life meant that my daughter was able to breastfeed the twins and also have time with Abigail on a daily basis - a very difficult feat if she'd be looking after the three single-handed. My daughter tells me that the never ending supply of food and drinks whilst she nursed was a God-send as was my willingness to get stuck into the washing!

I'm not as young as I was so I need all my energy for the day - my daughter (and her husband when needed) did the night feeds so I wouldn't miss out on my sleep.

By going out to playgroups etc I soon got talking to the other mums and grandparents. You'll soon be having 'coffee dates'.

If you're 'in situ' then be sure to make time for yourself. An hour or two doing your own thing can really energise you. Life can be hectic, noisy and emotional at times but also very rewarding. If I hadn't been able to be involved with the children so much I would not have had the bond that I have now - and I wouldn't have missed this last three years for anything!

## Gail Price, Nana to 31 month-old girl-boy twins:

I am a grandma, known as Nana, to girl-boy twins. They are 31 months old and they are my son's and daughter in law's first born.

We first had the twins overnight on our own when they were twelve weeks old and I found it a little difficult to ask about dos and don'ts, but once I'd asked I felt so much more confident (my daughter in law wrote it all down). This was invaluable and ever since, when we have them or their younger sister, a little aide-memoire comes with them.

The feeling is to go out and buy everything for your own house. Don't. It can be costly and they actually don't use it that much. We have bought a couple of good quality essentials by searching for sale sites. The most stressful thing for me was putting up travel cots!

## Marny Castledine, Nana to twin girls Olive and Isabelle, shares her experiences:



When our only daughter gave us the news that she was pregnant, my husband was only months away from retirement and we made a decision to move closer to the new family at that time.

However, several weeks and a scan later revealed that 'the baby' was to be twins. We hastily brought forward our plans and arranged the 100 mile move to our new home. We arrived when our identical twin granddaughters, Olivia Rose and Isabelle Grace, were 10 weeks

old with the post maternity leave plan being to provide the two days a week child care when my daughter returned to work.

We were in full 'Nana and Grandpa' mode from day one - even assisting with feeding whilst furniture was being unloaded around us!

We were so proud to parade 'our' baby girls around in their double pram, even though I was sadly never able to 'drive' due to arthritis - a double buggy sometimes seems to have a mind of its own!

Olivia and Isabelle are now three and a half and being located so close has allowed us the opportunity to watch them grow from babies to toddlers to pre-schoolers and being on stand-by to get our hands dirty (literally) when required.

The joy of spending family holidays with them, have them sleep over and be able to take them for ice cream treats is priceless. It is amazing to watch two emerging personalities grow from two outwardly identical little bodies and to watch the interaction in their ever more imaginative pretend play is a unique experience.

We are incredibly fortunate that circumstances have enabled us to move and be less than five minutes away from our family and to be able to see them on an almost daily basis - that certainly isn't the norm for most grandparents. My advice to prospective grandparents of multiples is to do two things: allow space for the new family to grow together but also enjoy every minute you have when 'on duty' or when all together as a family. It is so very rewarding and has the bonus of allowing the parents a little breathing space when needed.

## Grandmother Carol Mellor moves in to help her daughter in the early days:

The joy of learning at the twelve week scan that our only daughter was expecting identical twin girls was soon to be replaced by anxiety and fear when the twins were diagnosed with TTTS.

An operation was needed immediately otherwise both girls would die. The scan had revealed a growing amniotic sac around one tiny baby and a shrinking sac around the other.

Keyhole surgery, involving a tiny camera and a laser, was successfully performed at the foetal medicine Unit at St George's Hospital in Tooting, London, with her anxious husband. We waited and prayed. The scan two weeks later confirmed, they were both alive and well. We were all overjoyed.

The girls were delivered at 34 weeks by Caesarean at St Peter's, Chertsey in Surrey. Each weighed just over 5lbs. Both had small holes in their hearts and they would be monitored over the following year.

They were a challenge to feed as they were delivered before they could breastfeed and my daughter was determined that she would feed them herself. So, for two weeks she was expressing milk to go into bottles. Then she left St Peter's for home where they continued to be very fractious and windy taking small feeds frequently.

As their father had recently been promoted and needed to do the London commute Monday to Friday, I moved in as they were too far away for me to commute every day.

My daughter and I shared the double bed in the guest bedroom, propped up on pillows each with a baby on our chests listening to the World Service. Even now 'Sail Away' and the 'Shipping Forecast' in the middle of the night, bring it all back.

The two-hourly feeding went on for three months but the girls were very gradually becoming more settled and they appeared healthy. We evolved a routine where I got two hours uninterrupted sleep from 7am to 9am when my daughter got up with the girls and her husband. Then I walked the babies from 9.30am to 11.30am so my daughter could have her only uninterrupted sleep.

By six months the girls were more manageable, although showing no sign of sleeping through the night. My daughter ceased to breastfeed and I reduced my time to two days a week.

My daughter and her husband had decided to move nearer. Now they are

only half an hour away and my beautiful three year-old granddaughters have a baby brother but the bond which was established in those early months will go on for forever.

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### **Carolyn Barker, Grandma to fraternal twin boys:**

I am Grandma to four year-old fraternal twin boys. It came as a bit of a shock to find out that my eldest son and his wife were expecting twins. As my daughter-in-law experienced quite a lot of difficulties during the early stages of her pregnancy, we hardly dared to believe that everything would turn out well, and we would eventually have the privilege of being grandparents to twins.

Thankfully, the boys, although slightly premature and having to spend a couple of weeks in Special Care, were fit and healthy.

After a few months, mum had to return to work, and we offered to look after the boys two days a week, as the cost of childcare for the two of them was so expensive. The first few weeks were quite challenging for us, as it was mainly a case of getting them into a routine which suited everybody.

As a grandparent, everything seems to take so much more effort, and I must admit, we did get tired by the afternoon. It always seemed to be the case that one of them would have a nap, while the other was still wide awake - meaning that we never really got a break. However, persistence pays off, and eventually, we got them into a good routine whereby they both had 'quiet' time together - so even if one was still awake, they were still happy to lie down and have a rest (with their dummy!)

Even now, at the age of four, we continue to have a quiet half hour after dinner, where the boys can either watch TV, or read their books. It at least gives us time to recharge our batteries, if nothing else!

Despite all the challenges of the early days, we now find that the boys bring such joy into our lives. They are so much

more independent, we can reason with them and hold a proper conversation. They play well together, and being a pair, they have learnt so much about sharing with one another.

All in all, the past four years has been a fabulous experience, which has enriched our lives greatly.

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### **Jan Pound, Grandma to six year-old twin girls and seven year-old twin boys:**

Having waited, with thinly disguised impatience, to become a grandmother I suddenly found myself a grandmother to four within sixteen months!

My daughter gave birth to twin girls followed swiftly by my daughter-in-law producing twin boys.

Initially the challenges of feeding, changing and moving them around were enormous but now that they are six and seven respectively the rewards are enormous.

They are such fun and have formed their own little gang which is lovely to see. I think the secret is to never treat each set of twins as a pair. It is important to form individual relationships based on their own personalities that is personal to them and to you.

Being a twin is such a special blessing and I feel very privileged to have had the opportunity to experience the joys of this unique bond at first hand. We have such fun. Hopefully the bond we have forged now will stand us in good stead when we reach the dreaded teenage years!

### **Marion and Geoff Clark, grandparents to eight year-old twins and three and a half year-old twins:**

We are Grandma and Grandad to twins - twice. Our younger daughter, Liz, and her husband, Ian, have identical twin boys, James and Jack, aged eight and non-identical twin girls, Evie and Zoe, age three and a half. We also have two older grandchildren belonging to our eldest daughter.

The boys suffered from Twin-to-Twin Transfusion Syndrome (TTTS) which was well monitored at St Michael's Hospital, Bristol.

They were born at 32 weeks. Liz went back to work when the boys were six months old as I retired. We started looking after the boys one day a week, so we could take them to the Twins Club she had been attending. This led to us taking over running the club.

Just before the boys were due to start school Liz again became pregnant and it was two again! Evie and Zoe were born at 38 weeks. When Liz returned to work it was back to twins club with the girls.

We soon learned that the way to deal with twins was to be well organised. Our hints and tips are:

1. Follow the daughter's / daughter-in-law's house rules (feeding, sleeping times, etc).
  2. Don't do more than you have agreed to without asking.
  3. When helping with bottle feeding I tried to alternate which twin I fed.
  4. Get everything together before changing nappies or dressing children.
  5. Treat all children fairly with individual birthday cards and where practicable presents.
  6. Use reins / backpacks with toddlers if necessary - for when they run in opposite directions.
  7. Enjoy double smiles, double hugs and double cuddles.
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## Joan Caller, Nanny to twin girls, aged seven, and twin boys, aged two:



My name is Joan and I am a 62 year-old grandmother (nanny) to my daughters' twin girls Rubie and April, aged seven, and twin boys Blake and Ethan, aged two. Being a nanny to two sets of twins brings challenges just like it does for their parents.

I have been paralysed since a young age and confined to a wheelchair so many people feel I am unable to offer support to my daughter, but this is not the case.

I have looked after both sets of twins for my daughter whilst she continued to work 25 hours a week. We ride on the bus to the shops, access sessions at local children's centres and enjoy home baking together. The boys have definitely been more challenging than the girls but that may just be because I'm getting older!

Offering childcare support to my daughter enabled her family to be financially stable and has given me a way of keeping busy. I get to share their childhood in a special way and know that I am offering much needed support. They all keep me on my toes (wheels) and I love them all very much.

## Marlene Dymore, shares her experience of being a grandmother to two sets of twins:

I'm a grandmother, known as Nanny to two sets of twin boys - my eldest

daughter's identical twins, now eight years old, and my youngest daughter's non-identical twins, now three months old. Not forgetting my granddaughter and two 'singleton' grandsons, with my eldest daughter expecting another boy in August.

There is no history of twins in my family, so we really didn't know what to expect when Lucie announced, in 2006, that an early scan showed that she was expecting identical twins. First question: how did they know that they were identical? Apparently it was because there was just one placenta. She was also warned, that because one looked smaller than the other, that it was possible that not both twins would survive. So we also became familiar with another worry with identical twins - Twin to Twin Transfusion Syndrome (TTTS), which meant regular scans to check on their growth.

Lucie was disappointed that she had to have an elective C-section because her first son was an emergency C-section, but having two healthy, though small, boys soon put everything into perspective. She was determined to breastfeed her babies, and she did for 18 months!

When my youngest daughter became pregnant last year and seemed to be growing quite quickly, she started teasing her partner that she was expecting twins - not believing for a minute that she was! However, her twelve week scan showed two babies and her partner took some convincing that they really were expecting twins!

Although a non-identical twin pregnancy is not considered as risky as identical, it did mean that her babies were growing at a 'normal' rate and for the last few months of her pregnancy we couldn't believe she could get any bigger, but she did! Laura was prepared for a C-section because one of the babies was breach, but thanks to the skill and dedication of the staff, she was able to deliver them both naturally, just thirty minutes apart.

As the mother of three singletons, I am in awe of how well my daughters have coped with two babies, as well as having older children. My main role as a

grandmother is to help with the practical day-to-day stuff - housework, shopping, washing, etc. - to give my daughters more time to relax with their babies - more than rewarded by double cuddles!

From day one, Lucie dressed her boys differently, although it was not always easy to find two sets of clothes that were the 'same but different', but we enjoy the challenge!

When they started school, Lucie was told that their policy was to separate twins, but she stood her ground and they were put in the same class.

At eight years old, they have different personalities, are in different groups at school but still display that special bond that identical twins have (and I still can't tell them apart!).

At three months old, Laura's boys are just beginning to show their individual personalities and are slightly easier to tell apart (but not all the time!) What is not to love about being a grandparent!

## GRANDPARENTS' FACTSHEET

These FAQs accompany Tamba's factsheet for grandparents of multiples. It contains top tips that will help with your twins, triplets or more.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

Also accompanying this factsheet are Tamba's FAQs for grandparents of twins, triplets or more. It features detailed answers to frequently asked questions.

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