

Information for Partners

Finding out that your partner is pregnant can lead to many conflicting emotions, which is quite normal. Finding out your partner is expecting not one... but **two** or **more** babies at once can be even more terrifying, overwhelming and joyful.

Whether you have been trying for a baby for some time or if this pregnancy is a big surprise, it is common to experience a lot of conflicting emotions and to have many questions. Whilst a lot of the available advice and support is aimed primarily at the pregnant mother, this factsheet has been designed specifically for you, from the perspective of the partner.

In this factsheet you will find top tips from our community of other multiple birth dads and partners. In the accompanying sheets you'll find some of their personal stories that they have kindly agreed to share with you as well as answers to frequently asked questions.

The mother of your multiples will be regularly monitored, as the pregnancy progresses, by a specialist team of healthcare professionals. They should include a specialist obstetrician, a specialist midwife and a specialist sonographer, all with experience in multiple births. They will aim to involve the partner as much as possible. However the mothers' health and that of the babies is their primary concern. At times you may find yourself feeling a little helpless or detached from the experience. Rest assured you are an incredibly valuable asset to your partner and children and there are a great many things you can do to ease the transition into parenthood of multiples, which will help both of you.

41% of partners in our survey said their twins (or triplets) were not their only children.



In 2015 Tamba surveyed the partners of women with multiples, and asked them what they wish they had known before the birth of their children. 40% of the respondents, said that they wish they had known just how demanding and tiring it would be, especially in the first few months. Also a massive 76% of participants said the hardest thing to cope with was the lack of sleep and tiredness! The majority of partners we spoke to felt they could have made the experience much easier if they had known what to do beforehand to help and prepare.

We have worked with these partners to put together the top ten tips in this factsheet and accompanying 'Frequently Asked Questions'. Some partners have also kindly shared their experiences in the accompanying 'Personal Stories'.

We hope these will help in your journey and make you better prepared for becoming a parent to twins, triplets or more.

TOP TIPS FOR PARTNERS OF WOMEN HAVING TWINS OR MORE

Tip 1 - Offer your help and support to your partner, both before and after the birth. Little things make a big difference!

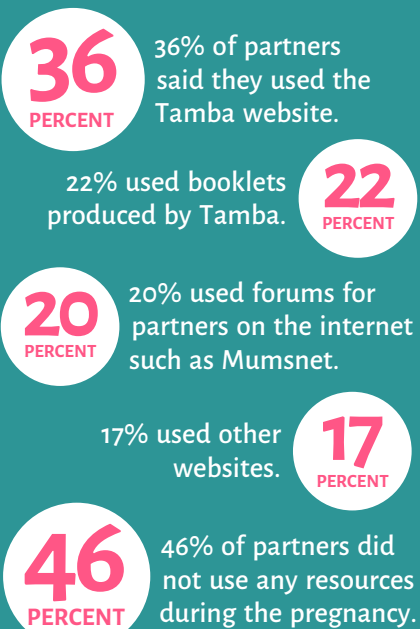
A multiple pregnancy is classed as more high risk than a single pregnancy, so you can expect to attend more hospital appointments than parents expecting just one baby.

To help you get your head around multiple birth pregnancies there are guidelines from the NHS in their [NICE Guidelines for Multiple Pregnancy](#). These guidelines contain the recommended best practice for healthcare professionals dealing with multiple birth pregnancies.

Tamba also have a number of resources to support you and your partner on this journey. Our [Healthy Multiple](#)

[Pregnancy Guide](#) can be downloaded for free by anyone who registers on our website. Our guides are packed full of useful, practical and essential information and advice developed in partnership with multiple birth families and healthcare professionals.

Tamba's survey asked partners of women having multiples what resources they used during the pregnancy:



(Partners could choose more than one resource for this question)

Many partners say it's helpful to attend antenatal and ultrasound scan appointments to enable you to support your partner, and to ensure you are informed and part of any decisions during the pregnancy.

39% of respondents to our partner survey said they attended all appointments, 35% attended most, 14% occasional appointments and 12% attended none.

It can be challenging to get the time off work as there are a lot of appointments. If you cannot attend then your partner may find it useful to take along another close friend or family member, but you should still try to be

contactable should any questions arise at the appointment.

Many of the partners we talked to said that they found attending specialist twin or triplet antenatal courses a valuable source of information and support.

Not all hospitals run special antenatal courses for multiple birth families, which is why Tamba run both antenatal courses and preparing for parenthood seminars 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. When you attend these courses you will also get given free printed copies of our top guides which many partners found essential reading to help them through their partners' pregnancy and the early days and weeks following the babies' birth.

All Tamba courses have a number of places for families in financial difficulty, so be sure to ask if this applies to you.

Once your babies arrive you will both be incredibly busy, which is why time spent reading and planning before they arrive is essential.

Helping your partner during the pregnancy and afterwards is important for any parent to be but especially for parents that are expecting multiples.

At 28 weeks your partner is likely to be the same size as a woman expecting one baby is at 40 weeks. This makes the logistics of everyday life rather challenging. Women expecting twins or more also tend to get more tired earlier in the pregnancy than those expecting just one and can experience heightened symptoms of indigestion, constipation, and back ache for example.

There are many simple ways to support your partner when she is pregnant, from taking on more household chores, booking antenatal classes, sorting out the practical things like bill payments and shopping, to day-to-day challenges such as helping her putting socks on, as her bump is so big finding her feet is challenging!

Simply look for different ways and opportunities to help and support your partner. Our survey respondents told us that offering help and support to their partner was vital and they found that it

was the little things that often made the biggest difference to their partner. Here is some more wise words from them:

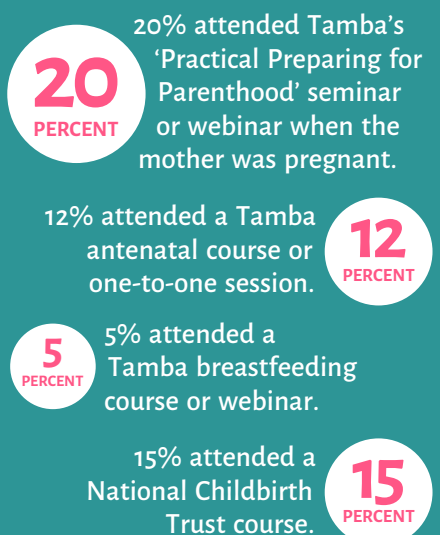
“**Help out as much as possible and try to give your partner a rest as much as possible.**”

“**Be there as much as you can. Help your partner out with shopping, cooking, cups of tea...**”

Once the babies are born your support will be needed even more than during the pregnancy. New-born babies feed and sleep in two to three hour cycles for the first few months of their life. And this can come as a bit of a shock to some new parents. To learn more about babies' sleep patterns and behaviour you can watch [video clips on our website](#) from sleep expert, Professor Helen Ball.

“**Offer practical help and support - cook, fetch drinks, shop etc, and importantly, offer to hold whichever twin is screaming even after non-stop breastfeeding. Your partner will appreciate the break, even for five minutes, of not having a twin attached to her!**”

Partners were asked if they attended any courses with the mother when she was pregnant:



“ Get involved with every feed, burp, assessment, and decision for as long as you can after the birth.”

Getting enough sleep is a real challenge for both parents. Lack of sleep can put a strain on relationships because sleep deprivations causes mood swings and exhaustion. Our parent communities said that working together as a team and supporting each other was very important in helping them cope.

Here are a couple of suggestions of ways to support each other from partners responding to our survey:

“ Be supportive; it can be an emotional time for both of you. Forgive your partner for cross words; often it's not meant. Sleep deprivation and fatigue can make us all grumpy and tearful, especially when the nappies and wipes aren't where you left them.”

“ Share the workload; you are essentially two single parents looking after a baby each. Do whatever you can to make life a little easier; it's all hard work and the little things really add up.”

“ Five minutes peace and a cuppa, or a short walk, is usually enough to de-stress so you are ready to start again.”

“ When paternity leave ends don't expect to sleep through the night leaving mum to do night feeds. It needs to be a two pronged attack for the sake of the mum and the routine of the babies. And even breastfeeding mums will need dad to change the nappies and wind the babies.”

Another essential bit of advice from other multiple parents is to take time to nurture your relationship. Try to realise that being sleep deprived is difficult for both of you. Work hard not to snap at each other and don't forget to appreciate all that you do for each other and your family. Make time for one another, ideally alone.

If you can't find a babysitter then

make the most of smaller moments in your day: cuddle up to watch a TV programme, share a hot drink before the next feed is due, or when you are apart send a message to let the other know you are still thinking of them. Most of all acknowledge and tackle any problems together.

OnePlusOne is a charity that can support you in strengthening your relationship: www.oneplusone.org.uk



Tip 2 - Accept and ask for help and support!

Being a parent to twins, triplets or more is hard work and can be very tiring. Even when two parents are working effectively together, it can still be exhausting, especially in the early days. A strong support network within the immediate family, extended family and friends can make a huge difference.

It is not always easy to accept help when people offer it and learning to ask for help can also be a steep learning curve. You might feel like it's your role to look after your partner and children and be the strongest one, but looking after yourself is vital. Call Twinline on 0800 138 0509. Our trained volunteers are all parents of multiples and are available every day from 10am to 1pm and 7pm to 10pm.

“ Accept help where it is given - it's not a failing.”

“ Bonding can be harder than you think - don't think you're alone in this and be patient. Just say 'help me' and admit if you find it difficult.”

“ We wish we had known about TAMBA or a similar organisation to talk to.”

Finding and asking for help is the key to coping with life with multiples. Asking for help is a sign of strength and your friends and family will feel pleased that you have asked. Remember that they may feel nervous about offering help, but be very keen to do anything they can to lighten your load.

Even the most independent of parents soon realises that trying to do everything perfectly and on their own is misplaced. However, it's not always easy for them to realise this, or accept help when it is offered.

Getting good help and support in place is essential both before the babies arrive and afterwards. Help can come in many forms such as financial advice, emotional support, or simply a couple of hours' uninterrupted sleep.

The advice from other parents who have been there is to find out what help is available, from all possible sources, and take up as much as you can.

Partners were asked what help they had received before the birth:

44 PERCENT 44% received help from family so they could attend antenatal appointments with their pregnant partner.

16% received help from friends so they could attend antenatal appointments with their pregnant partner. **16** PERCENT

27 PERCENT 27% had support with buying equipment.

15% had financial help from the Government. **15** PERCENT

56 PERCENT 56% had financial help from family.

(Partners could choose more than one answer for this question)

“ Accept all offers of help. Say when you need help.”

“ Find help. Find a lot of help!”

“ Ask friends and family for help with things like meals so you both can get some sleep.”

“ Learn to accept help.”

Partners were asked what help they had received after the birth:

80
PERCENT

80% had help from family looking after their babies.

30% had help from family looking after their older children.

30
PERCENT

24
PERCENT

24% had financial help from family.

13% had help from friends looking after their older children.

13
PERCENT

56
PERCENT

56% had help from friends with housework .

(Partners could choose more than one answer for this question)

Tip 3 - Other families with multiples / support networks.

Respondents to our survey also said how valuable it was to meet others with twins or more. Some were put in touch with other parents via the hospital, others joined local twins clubs or groups at local children and family centres.

Tamba has a [list of local twins and multiples clubs](#) on their website. By attending some groups with your partner whilst she is pregnant you may find that it can help you both to start building a personal support network.

Here some of our partners who responded explain how valuable they found being connected and supported was for them:

“ Speak with TAMBA's Twinline and support groups. Attend twin / multiple groups during your wife's pregnancy and get to know families who are surviving with multiples.”

“ I attended a tots group specifically for twins / multiples. Instant access to endless great advice from other people in a similar position, friendly faces and support!”

“ Go to a multiples group before yours are born and speak to other parents.”

“ I would have liked to have spoken with more fathers of multiples. I found the first year, especially the first few months, to be tough. Easier access to candid discussions by fathers or parents of multiples would have been great. It's good to have reassurance that the struggle and chaos are normal.”

“ ...how important it is to build relationships with other multiples' parents. The advice and support is invaluable.”

Online communities can also be an incredible source of information and support without geographical restraint. They increase the opportunity to connect with others in a similar position as yourself. Many twins clubs also have very active social media communities. You will also be pleased to discover that you are not the only one awake pacing the floor at 2am!



“ Find a reliable support network - other dads, dad blogs etc. for example www.twindaddy.com.”

“ Facebook has many twin groups which are an invaluable source of answers and support for parents of multiples.”

“ Only parents of multiples have any idea of what you are experiencing - the highs and lows!”

Tip 4 - Organisation / Routine.

Establishing a routine once your babies arrive can really help to reduce feelings of being overwhelmed and overloaded. You may find it beneficial to have a discussion and decide upon the roles and responsibilities of each parent before the arrival of the babies. This way you can try to make sure both of you are as involved as you would like to be.

For some parents a routine may be established during time in the special care baby unit, as a significant percentage of twins and triplets arrive early. In fact it may be useful for you and your partner to read our Tamba booklet on Neonatal Care and watch video clips of a parent of triplets talking about their experience of special care www.tamba.org.uk/Parenting/First-Year/In-Hospital

For others, developing a routine 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. Remember that all families are different so what works for one family, might not be what works for yours. In fact what works for one of your own babies, may not work for the other(s).

Some more words of wisdom from other parents:

“ Get in a routine from as early as possible with feeds / sleeps.”

“ Don't expect to get the babies into a routine; they will do what they want to do for the first six months. After that we introduced a routine.”

“It's hard at first but once you get that routine going it gets easier. Try not to get stressed when they are crying as things tend to take a little longer with multiples as you get the bottles ready and change nappies etc. They will be ok.”

“When one wakes up for a feed in the night, wake the other one and feed both. Otherwise you will be up again in an hour.”

“Learn to prioritise and not worry about irrelevant stuff that doesn't directly affect the babies' routines.”

Tip 5 - Sleep or rest when you can.

Looking after two or more newborn babies can be mentally challenging and physically tiring, but it's also very rewarding. The first few weeks and months when babies feed and sleep in two to three hour cycles can be particularly challenging.

Getting support and help from family and friends can help ease the strain. Over 76% of partners who replied to our survey said that the tiredness and lack of sleep was hardest thing to cope with. They coped by sleeping when their babies slept, getting naps whenever they could and not being afraid or too proud to ask for help.

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](#).

“Sleep when they sleep.”

“Sleep when you can as much as you can.”

“Get as much sleep as you can before they arrive!”

“Get as much sleep in before the twins arrive as there's little opportunity afterwards.”

Another tip was the importance of pacing yourself and trying not to rush around and do everything while the babies are asleep or with mum. Make sure you get some rest for yourself as

your babies and partner need you to have the energy to go back through the routine yet again.

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.

“Allow yourself to have some you time, i.e., get a hobby. I go fishing on a Friday, just to have a change of scenery. It's very easy to get lost in the moment as twins take all your energy and time.”

“Enjoy those moments of silence and solitude when you get them.”

“Just because they are identical it doesn't mean they will sleep at the same time!”

Partners were asked what they found hard to cope with:

77 PERCENT 77% said that lack of sleep / tiredness was one of the hardest things to cope with.

42% of partners found it hard to juggle work and family life. **42 PERCENT**

22 PERCENT 22% struggled with financial problems.

General worries and fear were a problem for 22% of partners. **22 PERCENT**

17 PERCENT 17% of partners said they felt inadequate.

(Partners could choose more than one answer for this question)

Tip 6 - Stay calm / relax and enjoy.

Managing your and your partners' expectations is an important but steep learning curve for many new parents of multiples. In the early days and weeks especially, expectations of what is achievable can simply be too high. This puts pressure on you both and can leave you feeling overwhelmed. 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.

Good communication between you and your partner is key. Talking to your partner and deciding between you what things are essential and which things you are both happy to let slide a little may help reduce the frustration and cross words that come from miscommunication. It is important to listen to each other and to respect each other's views and values, especially when they differ significantly. There is usually a mutually agreeable alternative to be found, but that is not easy when you are sleep deprived new parents. So where possible try to have those big conversations about your views on roles and responsibilities as early as possible.

A positive mind-set can make a huge difference to how well you can cope. Yet many parents can struggle with conflicting emotions and anxieties especially in the early days. It is important to talk both to your partner and others that understand. Being connected and supported is an essential part of becoming a resilient multiple birth parent.

Understanding that you don't have to do it all yourself is a helpful tip for coping effectively. In fact many household chores can be delegated to other family members. Indeed many grandparents who responded to our grandparent survey of 2015 said they valued being asked to help out with providing meals, laundry support and help with the children. For more information download our factsheet for grandparents which will come online soon.

“Be patient - both with your partner and your twins!”

“ Don't have too many fixed ideas - having multiples is such an adventure and having an open mind really helps.”

“ Relax a little bit more and enjoy the experience. It may seem overwhelming but it is amazing.”

“ Stay calm - it's good for you, the mum and the little ones!”

“ Stay relaxed - many of the things you worry about at the time seem so unimportant a few weeks and months later.”

“ Learn to let go of being in control. Breathe and just cope getting through one day at a time at the beginning.”

“ Go with the flow and try not to stress.”

Tip 7 - Do it your way - you're doing great!

Finding a way that suits your family 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, go 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 for the new challenges.

You can only do your best and do it your way. As one of our parents put it 'You cannot hope to be the best parent, just a good one' - those are very wise words indeed.

“ Trust your own judgement and do what feels right for you.”

“ What works for you is OK as long as the babies are happy. That gave us confidence.”

“ Don't be afraid to try new things - if something isn't working then change it. Your instincts are usually right!”



“ Go with what works for your family - don't compare yourself to other ideals or families.”

“ You cannot hope to be the best parent - just a good one.”

“ You're doing just fine, even when you think you're not.”

“ Take others advice with a pinch of salt. There is no right or wrong. Just do what feels right for your family and you.”

Tip 8 - Multiples are individuals.

Even though your babies shared a womb, and even if they are identical twins and shared a placenta and an identical set of genes, the fact of the matter is that they are each individuals in their own right. They will have their own personalities and they will develop at their own rate. One of the fathers in our survey said it very clearly: “treat them as individuals as they are brothers who share the same birthday not clones of each other.”

Children move through the stages of childhood at different rates. How far and how fast they master new skills is what we mean by development, but it's important to remember that this is not a race. All children develop according to their individual strengths, and they don't have to do it at the same time as anyone else - including a fellow twin or

triplet. Many parents worry about how they will tell their twins, triplets or more apart and it can be challenging especially in the early days. Dressing them in different outfits or different colours makes life much easier and can help others to learn which baby is which and also to learn to treat them as unique individuals in their own right rather than lumping them together as 'the twins', 'the quads' or 'the triplets'. It is very common for people to look for similarities and to comment upon them and there is no getting away from the fact that the world is fascinated by the miracle of multiples. As one parent of multiples said the best advice he was given was from a friend who was a twin themselves: “don't call them 'the twins' and don't dress them the same.”

“ Spend time with each individually from a young age.”

“ Recognise them as individuals and don't expect them to do the same things at the same time.”

“ Don't compare your twins to each other.”

“ Babies grow at different rates. Seeing them do things at different times was hard. You instantly jump to things being 'wrong'. Not having any previous baby experience or understanding, it was comforting to have this reassurance, normally given by my wife, family or nursery.”



Tip 9 - Enjoy it!

It can be easy to get caught up in the never ending round of chores that come with parenthood and it can mean that we forget to pause and enjoy the moment. Being a parent is a privilege and no doubt one of the most



challenging experiences most people will face but it is also the most enjoyable and rewarding one too. Add into that mix the wonder of being a parent to twins, triplets or more and it becomes even more precious. I'll leave our community of partners to tell you how precious is for them:

- “ Just enjoy it. Having one is special but two is precious.”
- “ Stay calm - it's good for you, the mum and the little ones!”
- “ Relax and enjoy it.”
- “ Don't stress the small stuff.”
- “ Chill out and go with the flow.”
- “ Breathe and relax - it's only twins.”
- “ Enjoy every moment.”

Tip 10 - Practical tips.

Here are a few practical tips offered by respondents. They cover a wide range of issues from money saving ideas to pre-birth preparations you can begin right now!

Whilst you're pregnant partner is packing, unpacking and repacking her hospital bag, it might be more useful for you to concentrate on preparing things that will be useful in the first few weeks and months after the babies arrive, so there is less chance of stress and surprises later. For example you could make and freeze some meals, make sure appliance, house and other insurance documents are up to date and

easy to find in an emergency, and keep on top of car maintenance.

- “ Buy a sofa for the nursery. You'll use it for feeding at first and sharing stories later.”
- “ White noise is an excellent aid to getting babies off to sleep.”
- “ We never kept quiet when they slept - Hoover, TV, chatting, general noise - they slept like logs.”
- “ Stock up on nappies and wet wipes as much as possible before they arrive; you will never have enough of them. Also have a changing mat, wet wipes and nappies stored downstairs and upstairs in the house in a place that is easy to get to.”
- “ Prep as much as you can the night before and leave a lunch in the fridge so mum can at least try to eat.”
- “ For the first week ensure you have access to quick and easy to prepare meals as there is very little opportunity to cook.”



HEAR WHAT OTHER PARTNERS HAVE TO SAY

To accompany this factsheet, Tamba have put together a compilation of experiences from other partners of women who've had (or are having) twins, triplets or more.

Partners' Personal Stories features stories from seven partners, written in their own words, and includes lots more useful advice.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

Also accompanying this factsheet are Tamba's FAQs for Partners of women who've had (or are having) 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 Partners of Women who have had Twins, Triplets or More!

Answers to frequent questions asked by partners of women who have had (or are expecting) twins, triplets or more. You should also read Tamba's [Information for Partners' factsheet](#) and [personal stories](#) that we produced along with these FAQs.

FAQ 1 - What are my paternity leave and work rights?

In the UK partners are entitled to a maximum paternity leave of two weeks and this must be taken in a single block. This leave cannot start before the birth, and must be taken within 56 days of the birth (www.gov.uk/paternity-pay-leave).

Many partners feel two weeks is not long enough, and choose to save up annual leave in order to be able to take more time off to spend with the new family.

“Store up as much annual leave as possible so that you can take leave after paternity leave. Paternity Leave can only be taken in a two week block. This includes weekends and bank holidays. So start the paternity with a few days of a holiday.”

“Use holiday as well as paternity leave. It's definitely not enough time.”

“Stagger your return to work following paternity leave by taking a few days annual leave each week. This allows you to gradually ease back into it.”

For babies born after April 2015, there is a new government initiative called 'shared parental leave and pay' (www.gov.uk/shared-parental-leave-and-pay). This allows partners to 'share' the right to have paid time off of work

during their children's first year. This can only be accessed if the mother stops taking maternity payments and returns to work. At this point any weeks left unused of her maternity entitlement can be taken by you instead. There is a set rate for this leave similar to that of maternity payments.

In addition if you have been employed for more than a year at your current job, you will be eligible to take unpaid parental leave if required. See www.gov.uk/parental-leave. This can total up to 18 weeks for each child, up to their 18th birthday. The idea of this is to enable you to 'look after your children's welfare' and can include reasons such as spending more time with your family or settling your children into new childcare.

If you choose to, and can afford to take some of this type of leave, it must be taken in whole weeks, but does not have to be used all at once. You may have up to four weeks unpaid parental leave per child in a year. However this is unless your employer agrees otherwise, so if you need more unpaid leave than this for any reason, it is worth talking to your employer. Considerations such as these might be invaluable if you find your multiples have to spend time in hospital for example.



87% of partners in our survey were able to take paternity leave.

On average, two weeks statutory leave was supplemented by two weeks annual leave.

“Try to talk to your employer if the babies are in SCBU about leave once they come home, as well as at critical points in their care in NICU. Give them a copy of the leaflets from Tamba to help them understand the unique differences faced with twins or triplets and why an extension of paternity leave may be needed. Use the GP if necessary to sign off work to be with your family if your employer won't or can't grant extended paternity leave and it is needed due to SCBU.”

“Work part time if you possibly can so that you can spend more time with the babies and your partner.”

“Ensure you have enough leave planned from birth onwards; your two week paternity leave may be swallowed up in ICU and you may have left yourself with no time off to help mum when the babies get home!”

FAQ 2 - What do multiples really cost?

Raising two or more children, especially all at once, will always be more financially challenging than when children arrive one at time. Members of Tamba can benefit from discounts in a wide variety of shops including high street stores and baby stores. There are also discounts on travel, insurance, as well as lifestyle discounts. You can use the savings calculator to work out how much you can save by [clicking here](#).

The advice from other parents of multiples was that you do not need to buy two of everything and you do not need to buy everything new. Many items can be purchased on auction sites such as Ebay. Local mother and toddler second hand sales are another great source of reasonably priced clothes, toys and equipment. The one piece of new kit that is advised to purchase are new mattresses, it is a good idea to read the information on the [Lullaby Trust website](#) to ensure you follow the Safe Sleep advice.

There may also be some support available from the government if you are on a low income. For example the [Sure Start Maternity Grant](#) is still available to help with some of the initial costs, if this is your first baby, you are expecting multiples, and you are in receipt of certain benefits. This can only be claimed up to three months after the babies are born, but can be claimed eleven weeks before they are due. Logic says it may be a good idea to get this application out of the way before the birth if you can to make sure you do not run out of time and miss out.

Other government schemes may alter the amount you are entitled to, depending on your circumstances and the number of children you have. The [Money Advice Service](#) is a good place to go if you are not sure what help is available to you or are worried about money in any way. It is run by the government and offers free and impartial advice, online tools, calculators and guides as well as telephone, online and face-to-face support. Again preparation is key and a good suggestion from one of our

parents is to get paperwork completed as much as possible before the birth, as you may have a delay in finding the time to do so afterwards!

“**Stock up on nappies, formula and baby clothes well ahead of time. Being prepared and not having to spend money on those items after they are born helps - there will be plenty of other expenses.”**

“**We are only have one income coming into the house and we have had to borrow money off our parents to get through to the end of each month.”**

“**Financial costs for the first two years are monstrous, and the law is stupid, the second twin is not your first child, but your second child, as if you were ever able to recycle or reuse any of the things you use with your first child.”**

“**Buy bigger size clothing from another twin mum.”**



FAQ 3 - Just how hard is it really?

Being a parent is wonderful and rewarding but also a challenging and life changing experience. 40% of partners in our survey said what they wished they had known was just how demanding and exhausting having multiples was really going to be. Over 76% said that tiredness and lack of sleep was the hardest thing to cope with!

“**People tell you about the lack of sleep. I wish I'd believed them!”**

Many partners told us that they had been advised by health professionals and others that the early days would be tough; however they had not taken this

advice on board fully. They also said that they had underestimated just how involved they would need to be in the care of their twins, triplets or more. The reality is that two or more babies at once is hard work. You won't really know the full extent until they are here. However it is also one of the most precious, unique and rewarding experiences you will ever go through. So don't forget in the midst of your toughest hours and days, to take a step back and try to enjoy your children and focus on making memories that will last for a lifetime.

Don't worry if it all feels like it is too much, you are under a lot of pressure and you shouldn't expect too much from yourself. Ask for more help if you can.

Remember Tamba is here to support you and your family during this challenging time. You can call Tamba's free helpline, Twinline, on 0800 138 0509. It is open 365 days a year from 10am to 1pm and 7pm to 10pm. Whether you are calling about concerns during your pregnancy, when you are feeling a little overwhelmed in the early days or when you are coping with the challenges of the toddler years or teenage years, Twinline's trained volunteers are there to listen and support you. All are mums of twins or triplets themselves.

If you feel overwhelmed, you can also seek support from someone like cry-sis. Cry-sis specifically provides advice and support with crying, sleepless or demanding babies. Their advice line number is 0845 122 8669, seven days a week, 9am to 10pm.

33% of partners in our survey said they struggled emotionally with depression or anxiety after the birth of their multiple babies.

Many partners told us about how much attention twins, triplets or more create. As soon as you leave the house with that double pushchair (or more), it is as if the general public are magnetised to you! You won't be able to avoid it, so try and enjoy it!

Multiples seem to come hand in hand with a consistent stream of (not always appropriate) questions and comments from everyone you come into contact with. Common questions include whether the babies were conceived naturally, whether they were born premature, how were they born, and of course whether your twins are identical or not! Remember you do not have to

“Twins fascinate people. I never expected that doing anything in public draws people’s attention, questions, comments and smiles. You’re very visible.”

Life with twins, triplets or more comes with a multitude of challenges: navigating double buggies around public spaces, keeping track on two strong-willed toddlers adamant on running in different directions, how to approach potty training and deciding whether to put your twins in the same or different classes at school. However in time you will learn many tricks on how to minimise the stress and maximise the joy. Your education started here.

“A lot of shops, train stations and restaurants are not equipped for larger buggies or two high chairs!”

“Don’t presume that you can fit two car seats in your newly purchased estate car!”



FAQ 4 - How will I know if I’m ready?

No single situation, person, or family will ever be the same. There is only so much you can do to prepare yourself for the arrival of multiples, but the fact that you

have taken the time to read this (and hopefully lots of other sources of information) shows that you are motivated already to do the best for your children and partner.

“You don’t need to worry about every eventuality - just deal with it as it comes.”

“Nothing really fully prepared me for the arrival of my twins. I have learnt to enjoy the challenge; every day is a learning experience.”

“I think it will always be a voyage of discovery.”

LINKS TO OTHER SUPPORTIVE CHARITIES

Working Families

A charity that helps parents, carers and their employers find a better balance between responsibilities at 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

Family Lives

A national family support charity providing help and support in all aspects of family life, including those expecting twins or more, and a 'becoming a dad' section.

www.familylives.org.uk/advice/pregnancy-and-baby/becoming-a-dad

www.familylives.org.uk/advice/pregnancy-and-baby/pregnancy-birth/pregnant-with-twins

The Fatherhood Institute

The Fatherhood Institute is one of the most respected fatherhood organisations in the world. A registered UK charity (number 1075104), our work focuses on policy, research and practice. Our vision is of a society in which there’s a great

dad for every child. The UK’s think and do tank for fatherhood.

www.fatherhoodinstitute.org

OnePlusOne

OnePlusOne is a UK charity that creates resources that strengthen relationships. Based on the latest research evidence, their work promotes early action in relationship support.

www.oneplusone.org.uk

Home-Start

Home-Start is a national family support charity that helps parents with young children to build better lives for their children. Their volunteers provide support and friendship to more than 29,170 families every year, through over 288 local Home-Starts.

They work in communities across the UK and with families on British Forces bases in Germany and Cyprus. Some areas of the country may not be covered by Home Start so please check their website:

www.home-start.org.uk/findsupport/search

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>

Seven Personal Stories from Fathers of Twins

Fathers of twins share their personal experiences below. You should also read our [Information for Partners](#) factsheet and our [Partners FAQs](#) that Tamba produced along with these personal stories.

Paul Hulme, dad to twins plus older sibling, shares his story:

I'm a dad to boy/girl twins Zach and Bethany who are 33 months old. They are the younger brother and sister to Maxwell who is six.

When Maxwell was three his mum and I thought we would try to give him a little brother or sister, never thinking we would give him one of each! From having all we needed for one sibling we were now one short of everything. It was like starting all over. We made the decision to find out the sex of the babies so we could plan for their arrival. To find out it was one of each was exciting and ensured they would be different in every way from that moment forward.

Maxwell was excited but like me and his mum had no idea how it would change the lives of us all. The babies were born at 37 weeks after mum was induced, they were good weights (6lb 6oz & 6lb 12oz). They were born healthy so all the books we'd read on premature births could now be given back to the hospital.

After two days in hospital we were on our way home. How are we going to sleep, function, get Maxwell to school, shop, see friends, watch the football, were all thoughts rushing through my head as I proudly carried out a blue and pink bundle from the hospital. I could hear whispers from other new parents pointing out the obvious "look twins". This was now my life.



Michelle and I had no choice but to work together. We functioned sometimes like robots, feed, change, wind, and bath repeatedly. Before we knew it we were three months in and our babies were getting bigger, stronger it was now the norm.

Maxwell played his part, passing nappies, bottles, new baby grows - we were a complete family all supporting one another. We were doing things that six months ago we thought were not possible: shopping, eating out, Maxwell's homework and swimming. It was all challenging but there is a way to make it work.

Now with the twins nearly three and Maxwell nearly seven we are set to embark on our first family holiday abroad. All the fears we once had are now replaced with new fears and as a parent I know we will always have fears

regarding our children, just different ones as they grow up. I'm proud to be a twin dad, never anything I would have chosen to do, but like anything in life you deal with the hand you are given. It's tough, it's tiring, it's fun, and it's being a Dad.

First time dad, Alan Lambert, shares his babies' dramatic entry into the world:

I'm a dad to wonderful dual-nationality bilingual (French / English) boy (Briac) / girl (Elyne) twins. They are now three years old and we moved from UK to France a year ago, but despite being overseas we are still Tamba members and still follow Tamba on Facebook and read the great articles they share.

We conceived by IVF after several years of trying and as my wife suffers from endometriosis she had an operation before we attempted the IVF. Throughout this long and draining process, and indeed right up to the implantation, we were told that multiples carried high risk and asked if we were sure we fully understood the risks we were taking. We always nodded knowingly but actually we were clueless. Nothing you read, or are told, really prepares you.

A surreal memory I'll fondly keep for life is that I sat on a cold station platform waiting for a train into London

hugging (literally hugging) the incubator box containing my wife's eggs. It was warm, but even then there was something paternal and protectionist about accompanying that precious package into the clinic from the hospital where my wife was just coming out of surgery. It's odd to think that in there, sat in a warm box on my lap, were the eggs that gave life to my twin Dad experience. I remember that first scan. I remember being on my knees next to my wife to be down at her level during the scan and giggling like a five year-old when we first saw two little 'beans' on the screen.

The next few months went by so quickly. I'm certainly doing my wife's pregnancy, and the Tamba sessions we attended, a huge injustice but I'm going to skip a few months on to the birth. We went in for one of the many, many scans. I'd tried to be off work for as many as possible, particularly after we'd had a bit of a scare at 28 weeks. The twins were now 33 weeks. We were told their growth had continued to slow, that my wife had protein in her urine, and that they wanted to admit her to keep an eye on things. That's I think probably when things started to feel a bit more real and scary.

My wife was confirmed as having pre-eclampsia. They told her they were keeping her in hospital and would try and keep the twins inside for another week. The weekend came and went and, on the assurance it would be a few more days, I went in to work.

The day started with a text saying my wife's results had taken a turn for the worse and they'd do a C-Section that evening. As the morning passed the successive texts became more alarming. They needed to do a blood transfusion before surgery. They would need to do the C-Section under general anaesthetic. They weren't waiting anymore, get here quick..! At which point I did the mad dash across London to get to the hospital. At least I share that experience with the other Dads!

Due to my wife's poor condition and the circumstances of the birth I wasn't allowed into theatre. I was therefore given a chair in a stark cold corridor outside of the operating theatre. My wife was in good hands. They had

doctors, nurses, midwives galore in there with her. A Consultant for her, paediatricians and midwives for each of the babies. As I sat there I knew this was it, I was about to become 'Daddy'.

The time passed so slowly. Finally I heard the first screams from inside. Then a red light flashes above the door, and in addition to the dozens of people already in there, dozens more start running in, with incubator trolleys in tow. I sat numb and sobbing in the corridor wanting someone to reassure me that all was ok. Someone eventually did. The twenty minutes or so I sat there waiting though felt like an eternity.

Despite the drama, the birth actually was quite smooth. My son Briac was supposed to be twin one. My fiercely independent daughter Elyne had better ideas. No sooner they had sliced my wife open and she thrust her legs out apparently. She had a few breathing difficulties when they first tended to her, so that's why they hit the cavalry button, but she was soon swaddled up with her brother.



My twin parenting experience then started with a stark choice: a smiling midwife wheels in the babies in those little trolleys and says (and I'm not paraphrasing), "Congratulations! Which one are you going to feed first?" Realisation suddenly hits. My wife is just coming around from major surgery under general anaesthetic and I have two premature babies who avoided

SCBU by a mere 40g to feed.

To this day I'm not 100% sure who I fed first. Elyne because she was first born, or Briac because he was the smallest of the two? Can't tell you. That precise moment is where the memory loss kicked in, and the days and months blurred into each other. Whoever it was I remember the experience distinctly. I felt so totally unprepared. I knew how to hold a bottle. But neither of my twins would be bottle feeding just yet. They needed to be cup fed. I felt completely out of my depth, but learnt quickly to adapt, to forget the comfort of professional life and being able to do things you know how to do and have a control over the outcome. Suffice to say I was out of my comfort zone. However, it was a magical moment and despite being very hard to see my wife taking a few days to come out of 24-hour observation hooked up to machines with constant alarms and warnings (her pre-eclampsia in fact had become severe, and it was only after I realised how serious the risks were for her - it took her months to fully get back to full health), I actually had the privilege of being the first one to do all the new baby rituals. First nappies, first cuddles, first skin to skin and first feeding.

Many singleton Dads talk of feeling a bit like a spare part, watching their wife / partner dealing with all these major milestones, but I have some special memories of my roles in the first few days with my babies.

My paternity leave went too quickly. My annual leave also flew by and after three weeks I had to get back to work. The next few months flew by. A good night's sleep meant getting more than two hours of uninterrupted sleep and only doing the feeds after 3am. A bad night meant being up every hour throughout the night and barely shutting your eyes for 30 minutes at a time. And then getting up at 6.30am to go to work. There were mornings I was too 'zombified' to drive, and I knew I had to brave the train.

As a twin parent, you do what you have to do. Being a twin Dad is an amazing experience and has made me a stronger person, a proud Dad and I hope a better husband.

First time dad, Bryn Regan, shares his tips for coping with twins:

I'm a dad to twins, Abigail & Oliver, who are now four years old. They are our first and only children and so we don't know any different. We were lucky in that they went through the full term of the pregnancy and spent only a short time in hospital.

Those early days were hard work as a new parent, learning what to do and essentially doing everything twice. We don't have family nearby so had to become self-sufficient as quickly as possible. I remember not getting much sleep as we would share the feeding during the night and spent most of the first year in a sleep deprived daze.



I used to change four nappies before leaving to go to work in the mornings so it wasn't long before I was an expert. Having a very large nappy bin saved us some valuable time as we wouldn't have to empty it every day. I also remember continually washing bottles and getting hold of a second kettle so that well-meaning visitors making a cup of tea didn't use the boiling water we were waiting to cool.

Getting out and about was important even in those early days even though it could take some time to prepare. Given that we had less time to do anything it was necessary to just accept we couldn't get everything done and that was ok. As

long as we had the basics sorted, we could get out and enjoy ourselves doing different things. We also had to accept early on that you can't always keep both babies happy at the same time when you're on your own. So having one baby crying was not unusual and not something to panic about.

Probably the most important and sanity-saving thing we did early on was settle into some form of routine. We established a bath and bedtime routine with bed around 7pm which gave us our evenings back, and the chance to catch up together after a hard day looking after the babies or working. It feels like an age since they came along and we've watched them grow into two very loving children who are full of life and are about to start school. In short, it's been hard work but well worth it. The whole experience has been fantastic.

David Christie, a father to girl / boy twins, tells us how he used his past experience to help him cope in the early days:

I have three year-old twins; a girl and a boy. I don't have other children. Before they were born I was a lawyer working in commercial disputes in Edinburgh and Glasgow. We moved to Aberdeen just before our due date, and I became a lecturer. So, when people ask how things changed when we had twins, it is quite difficult to say too much because, about that time, everything changed.

In some ways, my previous job was good preparation for the first few months of having twins; the intensity of having to try and focus and manage your time - when the demands of a 'client' might change quickly and without warning and over a long, long day felt familiar at that stage. It was like dealing with a big court case. So, to that extent, while it was tough going, I felt like I could manage it. Moving into a more predictable working environment, with more fixed working hours, has also helped.

My wife and I sometimes try and imagine what we would have done if we had not made those change; it's almost impossible to imagine.

What I found harder than the very early weeks, which I was sort of prepared for, was that while the most acute pressure of the early months did ease - it was a big thing for us when we got them into a bit of a bedtime routine - the overall intensity still stayed high after the excitement and adrenaline of the birth wore off. I wasn't as prepared for that and it was more of a case of 'hanging tough' and taking the difficult days as they come, as best as you can.

In hindsight, I think that some advice I got when I was in the early stages of the two year training period to become a solicitor would have been helpful: the first month seems to last forever; the first six months take an eternity but after that, the time hurtles past. I've found being a father a bit like that. The first six months needed a bit of digging deep for both experiences and, for both, I lived in constant terror of not doing the right thing but then it all accelerated and I began to get a feel for what's what. Having said that, when people said at the time, "It gets easier"; it never felt like that in either case!

I've tried hard to make the most of it and I think I have, but you can always do more.

First time dad, Mike Birtwistle, on how twins' dads get to be at the heart of things:

I'm a dad to three-year-old boy / girl twins. Hank and Lila are our only children, so I can't make any direct comparison with being a dad to a single baby. However I can say this; having observed friends with one baby, it is easy for the dad to become a bit of a bystander. With two, there is never that excuse. Be it feeding, changing, cuddling or playing, there is always an opportunity (and indeed a demand!) to be at the heart of things. Take this opportunity - you'll probably only get it once.

At the beginning, everything seems difficult. You have to learn a load of new things at a time when you are emotional and sleep-deprived. Yet soon, what felt like a massive trauma - changing a nappy, feeding, getting out of the house for a walk or getting a little one to sleep - becomes second nature. You won't recognise these triumphs at first, because they will be accompanied by the arrival other challenges, but one day you'll pause and realise that, without even noticing, you have become a fully functional dad.



My advice would be enjoy it as much as possible (it goes all too fast), throw yourself into it (you'll get more out of it that way) and be kind to your partner (there'll be times when you don't want to be kind to each other, but these will be the times when you both need kindness the most).

And, finally, congratulations! Being a dad to multiples is an amazing thing and watching them grow, learn and love together is pretty special. It will seem tough at times, but there is never a day when the rewards don't far outweigh the challenges.

First time dad, David, shares his change of lifestyle that came from the arrival of his non-identical twin girls.

I'm a father to non-identical twin girls; our first children. They were born ten weeks premature and are now seven-and-a-half months old. They spent six weeks in the NICU ward at the Norfolk

and Norwich Hospital, where they (and we) received, and continue to receive, brilliant care.

One of our girls was diagnosed with periventricular leukomalacia (PVL) while she was on the ward, which means that she is at a high risk of having cerebral palsy. We are already experiencing developmental delays with her; it's a constant source of anxiety. But the early diagnosis means that she is getting support from a number of therapists from a very young age, and we are hopeful that she will catch up in time; and day-to-day, needless to say, both the girls are an absolute delight, so worries tend to be confined to the dark hours of the night and early morning.

My wife and I are very lucky to live on a smallholding in rural Norfolk, and luckier still that my mother-in-law gave up half of her house for us. Having her next door has been a real godsend and that we don't have rent or a mortgage to pay means that I have been able to work part-time and take a full share of parenting duties.

For medical reasons, the girls are formula fed, so I've been able to be fully involved with feeding and everything right from the start. We felt fortunate to have great support with feeding (and looking after new-borns in general) from staff at the hospital, so we didn't feel thrown in at the deep end in the same way many new parents must. My wife is a writer, and we try to arrange things so that she gets a day or two a week free to work on her second novel while I look after the girls.

We've been lucky sleep-wise (one of our two - touch wood - has been sleeping through the night for some weeks), but we are still pretty exhausted a lot of the time. I think this presents the biggest challenge for any new parent, let alone new parents of twins: exhaustion can easily lead to grumpiness and arguments. We've found the easiest way to avoid this is to immediately admit it when you're tired and stressed: a simple exclamation of, "I'm GRUMPY," seems always to lead directly to smiles and a renewal of the 'united front' that we try to maintain. We've also split things so that my wife does anything that needs doing in the

night, while I do the early mornings. That way she gets a lie-in on days when I'm not at work and can catch up on sleep.

Paul Doherty, dad to twin boys, tells us how being a twin dad has made him a better dad:

I became a first time dad, aged 30, to twin boys. I remember the shock the first time the sonographer casually started talking about baby number two like it was something we should both know about; I was completely shocked whilst my wife was overjoyed after hoping for twins since we discovered the pregnancy.

We did a lot of reading in the months leading up to the birth as we knew that there would be little chance for these things once the babies were born. The one thing that I hadn't quite realised from our reading was just how much our lives would be turned upside down by these two 6lb new-borns. Our first few days in the hospital were a little strange as I needed to leave our new arrivals at the end of visiting time and not see them again until the next morning.

Our little ones were continually crying in those first few days and although the midwives were great, it took one in particular to realise that they weren't getting enough food from breastfeeding alone and she told us that we should dual feed (bottle and breast). This helped, a lot, and we were able to get them home on day five. At that point I hadn't seen the night time scenario but I was told about it each day when I went in so I knew that we were in for a period of disruption - I just didn't expect it to last six months!

We followed the advice from the information we'd read that advocated waking both twins once one twin had woken for a feed. Both of us would get up and whilst my wife gave the first baby a cuddle I would go and make the bottles. Then we'd wake up baby

number two and my wife could start breastfeeding whilst I made sure she had everything she needed - drink, TV remote, phone and kindle.

Meanwhile I'd be keeping myself busy as I knew that soon I'd be helping with bottle feeding, winding and nappy changing and perhaps repeating the cycle before they went back to sleep. It felt surreal to be sterilising bottles, washing dishes or watching one of our favourite programmes at 3am and it was even more surreal when I realised this had become the routine.

This next bit may sound a little unusual but the strange thing is - I'm glad of that experience. When I compare myself to friends with singletons, it's normally mum who will do the night-time feeds and get the opportunity for the late night bonding. The only exception to that may be one or two days at the weekend when dad does his bit and gives mum the chance to rest.

If we hadn't had twins, I, in all likelihood, would have fallen into that same pattern. Having twins meant that from the very first time they cried there was no option other than to jump in and be a major part of their lives. In all honesty I think that being a dad of twins involved me much more and probably made me a better dad as a result.

TAKE A LOOK AT OUR PARTNERS' FACTSHEET

Tamba has put together a factsheet called 'Information for Partners' that is packed full of useful tips and information for dads and partners of women who've had (or are expecting) twins, triplets or more.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

Accompanying the factsheet and these Personal Stories are Tamba's FAQs for Partners. It features detailed answers to questions frequently asked by dads and partners.

ESSENTIAL READING FROM TAMBA

Tamba has put together a number of booklets packed full of useful information and well worth a read.

Here are three of those booklets. Just click on the pictures to download them for free from Tamba's website.

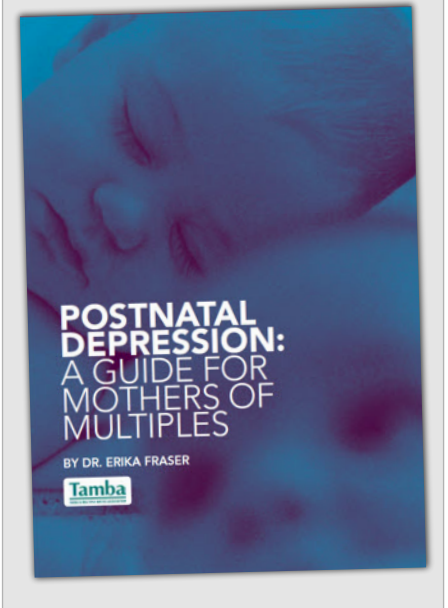
The Healthy Multiple Pregnancy Guide



Preparing for Parenthood



Postnatal Depression



Remember that you can also call **Twinline** on 0800 138 0509. Twinline is Tamba's free telephone helpline open every day, 365 days a year from 10am to 1pm and 7pm to 10pm. Whether you are calling about concerns during your partner's pregnancy, in the early days when you are feeling a little overwhelmed or when you are coping with the challenges of the toddler years or teenage years Twinline's trained volunteers are there to listen and support you. All are parents of twins or triplets themselves.

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