

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!

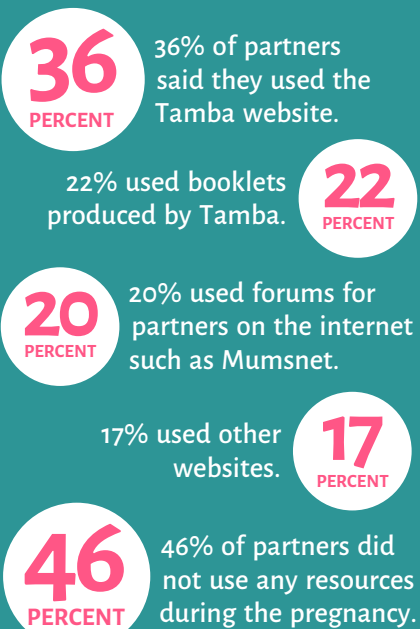
A multiple pregnancy is classed as more high risk than a single pregnancy, so you can expect to attend more hospital appointments than parents expecting just one baby.

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:

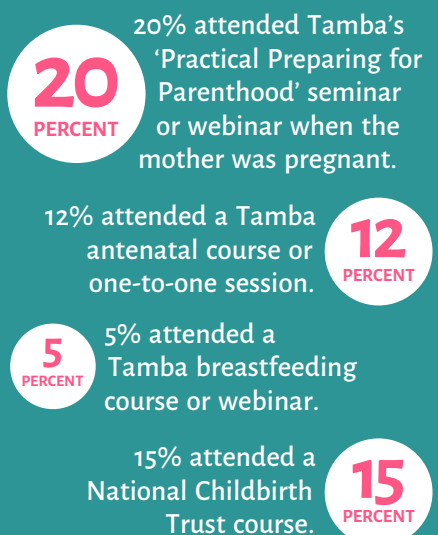
“**Help out as much as possible and try to give your partner a rest as much as possible.**”

“**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>