

Suggestions to help ease the first hectic few weeks with your new babies.

- **Establish a routine as soon as possible.** Planning is important so that you can count on doing certain things at certain times. Babies respond very well to routine. Keep a log of feedings, sleep times, medications given and other notes about the babies' progress, to help spot patterns, solve problems and communicate with the doctor.
- **Set your priorities.** Housework pruned to a minimum to maintain basic hygiene is a good idea. Spare time should be spent on yourself and with your family. If someone offers to help, have a chore in mind you would like done, e.g. bathe a baby.
- **Take care of yourself and be sure to get enough nutrition, rest and vitamins.** Do not forget your postnatal exercises. You come first, as your family is depending on you. See if you and your partner can take turns at night so that each of you gets at least a 4-hour stretch of sleep, plus another nap some time during the day.
- **ASK and you shall receive!** There are no mind readers. If you require support, asking for help is proactive. If you have no family nearby, community and/or church groups usually have volunteers willing to help out. You may also want to contact your local high school as many students must complete community hours before graduating. An extra set of hands for a few hours can be very helpful.
- **Strive to become a "good-enough" parent.** You cannot do it all and you cannot be perfect!
- **If everything doesn't get done today, it will still be there tomorrow!** If you are feeling overwhelmed, invite a friend or family member to help tackle the kitchen, laundry, ironing or maybe to take an older sibling out for a while. Extra hands for folding clothes, or making meals and snacks for siblings is appreciated and the extra help, and conversation, will make a world of difference. If you are not comfortable with friends and family assisting with the household chores, ask them to tend to the babies for a short period of time while you attend to the house.
- **Let as many stressors go as you can.** It will be a key to survival on those hectic mental and physical days.
- **Schedule regular time for yourself and your partner** so you can enjoy those little things and each other. It doesn't have to be huge; take a walk around the block, or go out for a coffee.
- **Make sure you keep in touch with friends and family—do not become isolated.** It will be challenging to get out with your babies, but you will be able to handle it when you are ready. For the first little while, if you cannot get out to see people, use the telephone for connecting with others, and ask people to come visit you.
- **Get out and about:** Try to get out with the babies for a walk or to the park when weather permits. A change of scenery and routine, fresh air and exercise work wonders for everyone. Sunlight may help babies regulate daytime and night time. In winter, you might push the stroller around an indoor mall.

- **Singleton Siblings:** Arrange special play dates or preschool for an older child providing his/her own special time, activities and things to talk about. Include him/her in the routine, putting clothes away, etc., but do not use him/her as a "gopher".
- **Remember that the babies will grow up quickly and life will constantly change with their growth.** Keeping flexible in your expectations and attitude will help to lighten the stress level and allow you to enjoy being a parent of multiples.
- **If you are having difficulty coping,** talk to your Doctor or Health Care visitor and explain why things are becoming too much to handle. Everything may be going well with you, but if not, talk to someone you feel comfortable with and whom you trust. This is not an admission of failure; it is an important first step towards improving the situation. Learn about the symptoms of postpartum depression, as mothers of multiples may be at higher risk for this biological disorder, and it can be treated.
- **Your family, blessed with multiples, will adjust.** You will have many wonderful, funny, tearful, and joyful moments to share with them in the years ahead. Take lots of pictures, and consider keeping a journal of memorable moments.
- **Contact Multiple Births Canada for a referral to the nearest local Chapter.** You need the support of other parents of multiples who understand what you are going through and how you are feeling. You might make some wonderful new friends.

Enjoy your Multiple-birth Family!

Multiple Births Canada Resources

- *Twin Care: Prenatal to Six Months*, Multiple Births Canada
- *Nursing Your Infant Twins*, Multiple Births Canada
- *Special Delivery: The Handbook for Parents of Triplets, Quadruplets & Quintuplets*, Multiple Births Canada
- Various prenatal and post-natal Fact Sheets from Multiple Births Canada including a full series on Breastfeeding Multiples
- *Expectant & New Parent Support Kit*, Multiple Births Canada
- *Finding Our Way: Life with triplets, quadruplets and quintuplets*, edited by Suzanne Lyons, produced by the Triplet, Quads and Quints Association, 2001 – available from Multiple Births Canada

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