

The twins-store Top 10 Tips have been compiled through our research with members and other parents of multiples.

If you would like to share your thoughts and top tips, please email your views to adviceshare@twins-store.co.uk - we welcome your input.

Please note, the advice given in this page is from parents who have had multiple births. It is not advice from health professionals. If you are having difficulties or need medical advice we recommend you contact your doctor or health visitor.

1. Routine is the number one top tip from all our research to date. Parents comment that having a routine is helpful for dealing with single babies and when you are dealing with two or more, it becomes so much more important.

Parents gave tips like ensuring you get the family up and ready at a set time each day to help the formation of a routine. Many parents recommended feeding the babies at the same time, or one straight after the other, in order to get them used to their feeds at roughly the same time, and give you a break in-between feeds. Most parents adopting this tactic also said that they would ensure they continued this during night feeds. For example, once the first baby awakes, waking the other(s) for their feed. That way the babies are more likely to go off to sleep afterwards and give you some precious sleep time yourselves.

If you are like us, it might take a little while to work out what your routine consists of. This is why we have asked other parents to contribute to a 'Routine Guide' which we will add to our Advice Share section soon. This will be an outline of a 'typical day' - no doubt everyone's will differ, but the hope is that it will give some useful ideas. In addition, we have put together a 'Feeding Sheet' which can be downloaded from our Advice Share section. This is aimed at helping you keep track of the feeds and changes in your day, and more importantly, at night.

2. Help from others, number two on our list. This could be from partners, family or professionals such as a nanny/child carer or baby sitters. People can help in many ways, from taking one or more of the babies for a little walk, to helping with the shopping or housework. On occasions, you may find it helpful just to have an extra pair of hands for a few hours. Many parents of multiples comment that caring for their little ones is a partnership and not something which is easy on your own. If you don't have family and friends around to help, your Doctor/Health Visitor may be able to tell you where you can get additional support. We were very lucky that our Health Visitor was able to arrange for a trainee classroom assistant to come and help us during the babies' first few months. This gave us lots of help and support when we needed it, and we also benefited from a new friendship.

3. Rest/Sleep when your babies do. During the first 3 to 4 months, you might find that days often turn to night and any sleep patterns you used to enjoy will need to be put on hold. Many people commented that being able to snatch a rest or sleep when your babies do is vital in this time – this is opposed to using the time to catch up on housework or chores!

4. 'Me time' came joint fourth. It is often stated that you put so much effort in to caring for your little ones that time for yourselves can be over looked. A trip to the local coffee shop with friends seems to be a winning solution for many parents. Another option can be to ask a friend/family member to take one or more of the babies for a short walk to give you a bit of time to yourself in the house, but again, try to use this time for yourself (take a bath, read a book, sleep or just put your feet up) rather than rushing around trying to do all the housework.

Take them out was another front runner. Getting out and about for walks can be really useful (weather dependent, of course). The motion of a buggy often helps the babies sleep, so many parents make this part of their daily routine. Whether you're walking to the shops, visiting the park or just wandering, it may give you a few minutes to relax – that is until they are big enough to climb out of the buggy!

Many parents also find visiting friends and relatives is helpful in the early days, when the babies are happy being placed onto play mats/the floor or sitting in their buggy/car seats.

Like many others, we found that joining a local twins group was a life-line. It gives the opportunity to share your experiences with others who are in the same boat as you and discuss any queries or worries you may have. The babies also benefit from interacting with others from an early age. Many twins groups also arrange nights out for mothers/parents. We will be featuring a list of local twins groups in our Advice Share section soon.

6. Don't worry about housework, came in at number 6. This seems to be especially relevant to new parents. We all like to think that we can carry on as normal with a nice, tidy house, but often it isn't possible to do everything. The advice from our parents was concentrate on the babies – don't worry about how your house looks. As long as you have the things you need, when you need them (ie clean bottles), other things can wait.

7. Get the most suitable Buggy. Making sure you purchase the right buggy for your needs was noted by many parents. For some people, the weight of the buggy was most important, others said that the size of the buggy was an important factor (making sure it fits through your doorways and in your car top of the list). Other things to consider is where you will be going with your buggy, if you will be going for walks into the country for example, getting a buggy which can cope with the terrain will be important). We are currently developing a checklist to help you choose the ideal buggy to fit your lifestyle and welcome any suggestions from members. Please contact us at adviceshare@twins-store.co.uk to give your views on this important factor.

8. Organise your Change Stations. It may seem obvious, but many parents commented on the importance of organising the areas where you will change and bathe your babies as another top tip. Many parents opted for two stations, one upstairs, one downstairs, both with the necessary items to ensure that you don't have to run up or down the stairs every time you want to change one of the babies. It seems that ensuring you have the change stations set up for day you get out of hospital is important. With everything in place from day 1, it is one less thing to worry about. It will also help you to set your routine.

9. The Usefulness of Bouncing Chairs. Many parents included making use of baby equipment as their top tip - baby seats and baby walkers scored high on the list. The general opinion was that we only have one set of hands, so a swing or baby walker (when they are older) can be extremely useful to entertain your little one(s) while you deal with the other. Bouncing chairs were felt to be top of the list of useful equipment. Many parents of multiples use the bouncing chairs to help them feed the babies. Bouncing chairs can be used from a very early age (with head huggers) and allow you to feed your babies together at the same time. Of course, you don't get the intimacy that you would holding your babies when they are sitting in a bouncer, but it gives you the ability to feed at least two at one time, thus freeing up quite a lot of your day. Other parents have used the hands-free systems to overcome this.

10. Being Prepared when Out and About. Parents noted the value in ensuring you are prepared with items such as Change Mats when you are out and about. Many changing rooms do not have good surfaces to lay your babies when changing, so these come in very handy. There is a fine line between being prepared and taking the kitchen sink with you – when you have to take two or more of many items (nappies, clothing change etc), it can mean a very large or heavy bag! We found utilising spare pockets in the car and buggy helps to cut this down considerably. If you keep these topped up at all times, it can also help you to get out of the house a bit quicker, knowing all the change equipment is in the back of the buggy, for example.

Other advice just outside the top ten is

- Avoid taking your babies to bed with you - as it forms bad habits (or should we say nice habits that are hard to break!)
- Buy two of each toy – multiples are notoriously bad at sharing – something we are discovering with our two at the moment.
- Join your local twins group – as noted in top tip number 4 – twins groups are a great source of information, help and support. Most parents of multiples find them to be of great benefit.
- Buy easy to wash baby clothes – it goes without saying that you will be doing lots of washing and there is nothing more annoying than clothes which take a lot of effort to clean or iron, or which lose their shape once washed.