

# BREASTFEEDING AND SPECIAL SITUATIONS

## TWINS OR MULTIPLES

The benefits of breastfeeding for mothers of multiples and their babies are the same as for all mothers and babies — possibly greater, since many multiples are born early. The idea of breastfeeding more than one baby may seem overwhelming at first! But many moms of multiples find breastfeeding easier than other feeding methods because there is nothing to prepare. Many mothers successfully breastfeed more than one baby even after going back to work.

### SEEKING SUPPORT

Reach out to other moms of multiples and get help and information by:

- Finding Internet and print resources for parents of multiples. Some good resources include:
  - La Leche League International  
FAQ: [www.llli.org/faq/twins.html](http://www.llli.org/faq/twins.html)
  - *Mothering Multiples: Breastfeeding and Caring for Twins or More!*

- Joining a support group for parents of multiples through your doctor, hospital, local breastfeeding center, or La Leche League International.
- Finding a lactation consultant who has experience with multiples. Ask the lactation consultant where you can rent a breast pump if the babies are born early.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Even if your babies need to spend time in the neonatal intensive care unit, breastfeeding is still possible with some adjustments.



**MAKING ENOUGH MILK**

Most mothers can make plenty of milk for twins. Many mothers exclusively breastfeed or express their milk for triplets or quadruplets. Keep these tips in mind:

- Breastfeeding soon and often after birth is helpful for multiples the same way it is for one baby. The more milk that is removed from your breasts, the more milk your body will make.
- If your babies are born early, double pumping often will help you make more milk.
- The doctor's weight checks can tell you whether your babies are getting enough breastmilk. You can also track wet diaper and bowel movements to tell whether your babies are getting enough milk. For other signs that your babies are getting enough milk, see [page 20](#).
- It helps to have each baby feed

from both breasts. You can “assign” a breast to each baby for a feeding and switch at the next feeding. Or you can assign a breast to each baby for a day and switch the next day. Switching sides helps keep milk production up if one baby isn't eating as well as the other baby. It also gives babies a different view to stimulate their eyes.



“ When they were first born, it was too overwhelming for me to care for them at the same time. I fed them one at a time, which was nice, because I was able to bond with each individually. But then I realized that I was pretty much feeding one of them every one to two hours and in order to get more sleep, I started feeding them at the same time. Once I got the hang of feeding both at once, I was able to free up so much more time! They started to get on the same eating/sleeping schedule, and while both were sleeping, I would find myself having a solid two to three hours to catch up on some sleep, relax, and clean up around the house. It was so liberating and much needed! I'm so glad I figured out something that worked for all of us. – Jen, Charleston, South Carolina

Many breastfeeding basics are the same for twins or multiples as they are for one baby. Learn more about these important topics:

- How to know your babies are getting enough milk ([page 20](#))
- How to troubleshoot common challenges ([page 22](#))
- Ways to keep milk supply up ([page 23](#))

## BREASTFEEDING AFTER BREAST SURGERY

How much milk you can make depends on how your surgery was done, where your incisions are, and the reasons for your surgery. Women who had incisions in the fold under the breast are less likely to have problems making milk than women

who had incisions around or across the areola, which can cut into milk ducts and nerves. Women who have had breast implants usually breastfeed successfully.

If you have had surgery on your breasts

for any reason, talk with a lactation consultant. If you are planning to have breast surgery, talk with your surgeon about ways he or she can preserve as much of the breast tissue and milk ducts as possible.

## ADOPTION AND INDUCING LACTATION

Many mothers who adopt want to breastfeed their babies and can do it successfully with some help. You may need to supplement your breastmilk with donated breastmilk from a milk bank or with infant formula. But some adoptive mothers can breastfeed exclusively, especially if they have been pregnant. Lactation is a hormonal response to a physical action. The stimulation of the

baby nursing causes the body to see a need for and make milk. The more your baby nurses, the more milk your body will make.

If you plan to adopt and want to breastfeed, talk with both your doctor and a lactation consultant. They can help you decide the best way to try to establish a milk supply for your new

baby. You might be able to prepare by pumping every three hours around the clock for two to three weeks before your baby arrives, or you can wait until the baby arrives and start to breastfeed then. You can also try a supplemental nursing system or a lactation aid to ensure your baby gets enough nutrition and that your breasts are stimulated to make milk at the same time.

## USING MILK FROM DONOR BANKS

If you can't breastfeed and still want to give your baby human milk, you may want to consider a human milk bank. A human milk bank can dispense donor human milk to you if you have a prescription from your doctor. Many steps are taken to ensure the milk is safe.

Some reasons you may want or need a human milk bank include:

- You are unable to breastfeed because:
  - Your baby was born premature.
  - Your baby has other health problems.
  - You take certain medicines that are dangerous for babies and can be passed to your baby in your breastmilk.

- You have a specific illness (like HIV or active tuberculosis).
- You get radiation therapy, though some therapies may mean only a brief pause in breastfeeding.
- Your baby isn't thriving on formula because of allergies or intolerance.

Some mothers give their milk directly to parents of babies in need. This is called "casual sharing." But this milk has not been tested in a lab such as at a human milk bank. The Food and Drug Administration recommends against feeding your baby breastmilk that you get either directly from other women or through the Internet.

You can find a human milk bank through the Human Milk Banking Association of North America (HMBANA). HMBANA is a group of health care providers that promotes, protects, and supports donor milk banking. You can also contact HMBANA if you would like to donate breastmilk.

To find out if your insurance will cover the cost of the milk, call your insurance company or ask your doctor. If your insurance company does not cover the cost of the milk, talk with the milk bank to find out whether payment can be made later on or how to get help with the payments.