

## Information for Parents of Triplets, Quads or More!

Finding out you are expecting a baby can evoke many contradicting emotions of joy and excitement, switching to panic and fear. Your life is about to change as you know it. If you are one of the few families who find out they are expecting triplets, quads or even more, then these feelings may be quite overwhelming! Don't worry this is a normal reaction to a very special and unusual situation.

### To give you some idea how unique your situation is, here are some statistics on UK births based on the most recent 2013 data:

In total there were 770,502 births in the UK in 2013. Of these 11,980 were twins (1.6%). The incidence of triplet births was only 204. That's just 0.03% of all births that year!! The incidence of quads or more was even less, with only three sets born in the entire country.

Tamba asked parents of triplets (or more) about their experiences in the hope of passing on some of their valuable first-hand experience and information to other families who are just embarking on the incredible journey themselves.

### TOP TIPS FOR PARENTS OF TRIPLETS, QUADS OR MORE!

#### Tip 1 - Information and Preparation.

In the 2015 Tamba survey of triplet and quad parents, the respondents emphasised how important it is to gather as much information as you can, to help you prepare for this life changing event.

Often a worry during pregnancy for parents of higher order multiples is not only the health and wellbeing of the babies, but the mothers' health too. A triplet or quad pregnancy is considered a 'high risk pregnancy'.

The team of health professionals involved in your care will be monitoring



your pregnancy closely, and so you can expect to have lots more scans and appointments with the specialist team than a mum expecting a single baby.

It may help you to stay more calm and relaxed if you write down any questions you want to ask and take this with you to your appointment. This can help you feel more informed about your care during your pregnancy and afterwards.

If you register on the Tamba website you can download for free Tamba's [Healthy Multiple Pregnancy Guide](#). This is packed full of useful and important information about multiple birth pregnancies that can help support you throughout your pregnancy.

**When we surveyed parents of triplets or more, 63% said their babies were born between 32-37 weeks gestation.**

Many of the parents we asked, recommended you ask for a visit to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and Special Care Baby Unit (SCBU) prior to having your babies. One recent mother of triplets said:

**“ Have a tour of neonatal in advance if you can as you are very likely to be there for some time with higher order multiples. It's a tough time and we found it easier knowing what we were going to be faced with.”**

**91% of parents surveyed said that their babies needed to spend some time in a neonatal unit (although for many this time was limited).**

Ask lots of questions whilst you are there. It is more likely than with a singleton or twins that your triplets or quads will need to spend some time in special care. Parents have told us they would have found their time in special care easier to cope with, and less of a shock, if they had already known a bit about what to expect. Download [Tamba's Neonatal Guide](#) to read more about multiples and special care.

Some hospitals offer special ante-natal classes for parents expecting multiples, so it's worth asking your unit what they offer.

**86% of parents of triplets or more had friends or family go with them to ante-natal appointments.**

Tamba have a variety of courses specifically for parents of multiples. The most popular course is the Practical Preparing for Parenthood seminar, which is delivered by trained volunteers who are all parents of multiples themselves. Not only can they provide you with more valuable information, but it is a good place to meet other families who are also expecting multiples.

Asking to be put in touch specifically with other triplet and quad families, via your midwife or consultant, Tamba, Multiple Births Club or online, may lead to valuable sources of support for the future. One of the best ways to get a true insight into what life might be like, is from some of the people who already know!

### Tip 2 - Rest and Relaxation.

Prior to the birth, many mums (over 11%) said that they wished they had taken the time to rest a lot more, before their babies arrived. It is important to conserve your energy, as a higher order multiple pregnancy is very demanding on your body and it is important to get plenty of rest.

One recent parent of triplets said:

**“Don't try to do too much, it is exhausting, and you need to put yourself and the babies first.”**

The advice was not much different after the birth, except a little less easy to do! In fact a huge 62.4% of the parents we asked said that lack of sleep/tiredness was what they found hardest to cope with.

Sleep when the babies sleep, or whenever else you get the chance! Don't forget to work as a team. Take a look at these couples' clever solutions:

**“Keep a firm routine and have one person do the bedtime feed and a different person to do the early morning feed to maximise sleep.”**

**“DO IT IN SHIFTS - my husband and I cared for the children at different times of the day, very rarely together so we would each get a few hours uninterrupted sleep a day.”**

**“Babies are hard work. Three babies are really hard work! Splitting the night into shifts with your partner so that you both get some uninterrupted sleep can help. Put earplugs in during your sleep shift and sleep; trust your partner to cope.”**

To help with feeding all their babies some mothers will express their breast milk so that others can help.

To find out more about breast feeding multiples and expressing you can sign up to one of our [Breast Feeding Webinars](#) and listen from the comfort of your own home to get top tips and answers to FAQs. Tamba also has a team of [Breast Feeding Peer Supporters](#) can help support mums after the birth and a [Breastfeeding Guide](#) which can be downloaded from the Tamba website.

### The survey asked about help that parents had received after the birth:

**84** PERCENT 84% of parents with triplets or more had help caring for their babies from family.

48% had help from family with housework. **48** PERCENT

**39** PERCENT 39% of survey respondents received help from Home Start.

35% had help caring for their babies from friends. **35** PERCENT

**15** PERCENT 15% had help with housework from friends.

(Parents could choose more than one answer)

### Tip 3 - Routine and Organisation.

Once your babies make their arrival into the world, you have to figure out how to approach the care of three (or more) newborn babies all at once.

The most frequently mentioned tip (almost 30%), was how important it is to have a routine in place and also try to be organised. Many higher order multiples are born prematurely and require a stay in hospital after birth. Many hospitals encouraged parents to help with the babies care as much as their situation allows. A repeatedly mentioned tip was to take advantage of this time, for establishing a routine, and to try to take this routine home with you.

The key is to find a routine that works for you and your babies and it can take a while for this to establish (so be patient and try not to be too hard on yourself).

Parents of triplets, quads or more who responded to our survey said:

**“Time in NICU is VERY helpful for establishing a routine for your babies - even if it's not as cosy as you might have imagined your babies' arrival in the world to be.”**

**“Be organised and stick to a routine! Whiteboards are amazing and help other people understand the routine. They are useful to note who was fed, how much and whether they have had a wet or dirty nappy as it's easy to forget. And in case of sickness it might be needed to advise a health professional.”**

**“Tomorrow's another day - so if you have a bad day with your routine etc, don't worry - you can make a fresh start tomorrow.”**

### Tip 4 - Asking for Help.

Having three (or more) babies all at once will be a challenge and any help that you can get is a bonus.

Asking for help is a key to coping effectively and was a top tip given by nearly a quarter of the parents we asked.

For many it can be hard to ask for help but asking for help is a sign of strength and many people will feel pleased that you have asked.

Getting good help and support in place is essential both before the babies

arrive and afterwards. Tips from parents of triplets and quads are:

“Accept help. I always felt bad when someone offered to do something for me. People will only offer so many times. I just wish that I would have let them.”

“Don't be afraid to ask for help and accept it. I was too proud initially and made it much harder than it needed to be.”

The help you receive may be practical help with the babies, or it might be financial advice, emotional support, or physical help around the house.

Be specific about what you would like help with. Some people may want to help cuddle and feed a tiny newborn, but help with the washing, housework, a meal to put in the freezer or lifts to and from hospital might be more useful!

Remember that some people may feel nervous about helping especially with looking after newborn babies.

“Ask for help from family, friends and neighbours, but be specific about what help you need. For example, a neighbour could do a load of laundry at their house or a friend could cook a meal.”

#### Tip 5 - Look After Your Relationship and Each Other.

Another key tip from respondents to our survey is to look after your relationship with your partner. Work as a team and support each other as it will be a challenging time. It is vital to look after your relationship as well as caring for your babies.

Try to realise that being sleep-deprived is difficult for both of you and can lead to tension or a feeling of being overloaded and overwhelmed. Finding some time for each other can help. For example, doing something simple like sharing a hot drink before the next feed is due, or when you

47% of survey respondents had help with night-times including night feeds.

are apart, send a message to let the other know you are still thinking of them. Most of all acknowledge and tackle problems together.

These parents suggest:

“Work together and support each other. Regardless of how tired and irritable you get.”

“Talk to each other and acknowledge each other's fears and feelings. Do not ignore any issues between you. Seek help through relate or other counselling early.”

#### Tip 6 - Support Network and Groups.

Online support via social media can be very beneficial. For example, the Tamba Triplet Facebook page and also the 'UK Triplet and Quad Mummies' Facebook group.

Parents in the survey also said how valuable it was to meet other parents of triplets or more, for example, at your local Twins and Multiple Births Club. A list of local clubs can be found [here](#).

Try and attend some groups whilst you are pregnant to start building a network.

One parent of triplets said:

“Having the support of other triplet / quad mums on the Facebook group was invaluable. Knowing other mums were going through the same as me and that there were others who had gone through it and come out the other side, gave me hope!”

Once your babies arrive, getting out the house is important for you all, but don't feel pressured to do so until you feel ready. The important thing is not to get stuck in a rut of feeling overwhelmed and staying indoors because it feels easier. This can make you feel even more isolated.

If you are struggling with the logistics of getting out, because you need more pairs of hands to help, then be sure to ask a friend or contact [Home Start](#), which is a charity that provides hands-on support to families with children under the age of five.

If you are struggling financially with buying a buggy, be sure to ask at your

local children and families centre if there are any local charities that can help.

Many of our families use a combination of baby slings and double or single buggies to make getting out and about easier when there are two adults available.

For families in severe difficulties you can apply to our [Helping Hands](#) scheme to see if you are eligible for some support.

### Parents of triplets or more were asked what they used to take their babies out and about:

76% used a triple buggy or quad buggy.

76 PERCENT

46 PERCENT

A double buggy with a single buggy was used by 46%.

36% used a double buggy and a sling.

36 PERCENT

(Parents could choose more than one answer as families sometimes vary the buggies they use)

#### Tip 7 - Don't make comparisons.

Nearly 12% of triplet mums mention how important it is to not compare yourself and your family to other mums and families. In time you will work out what works best for you and your family.

Parents in our survey say:

“Remember you have a very special situation and people may comment and try giving you advice on how they did things, but they haven't had to bring up three or more babies at the same time and so cannot really comment. You will be doing a great job.”

“Take the advice that you think is useful or helpful and ignore what you think is not.”

“No-one can imagine coping with triplets, so everything you ever do will astound everyone.”

### Tip 8 - Practical Tips.

The parents we spoke to also came up with a huge amount of practical tips and tricks! Here are the most popular and a few of our favourites!

“Colour-code everything, from bottles to dummies and even the triplets!”

“Online shopping is essential. Start whilst pregnant so you can set up shopping lists.”

“Minimise your most used rooms of clutter to make it easier to keep clean and organised as when the babies come you need to do the bare minimal.”

“Buy a tumble dryer if you can. Not having clothes hanging everywhere, all the time, kept my head clear and made me feel less stressed.”

Do also refer to the [Tamba Practical Preparing for Parenthood Guide](#) for more useful tips.

### Tip 9 - They don't stay small for long.

Half of parents in our survey took the view that they wished they had spent more time just enjoying the babies whilst they were small, as they were so busy and it rushed past too quickly.

“Do make time for cuddles when they are babies. Looking back, I spent so much time just washing, feeding etc and I wish I had spent more time just being with them, as it goes past so quickly.”

“They get easier as they get older. Try to enjoy it as you're so busy that the baby days are over in a flash.”

Others take the position of, 'don't worry,' it doesn't last for long! Even though those first few weeks and months are difficult, try to look forward to a time when nappies, bottles and sleeping routines are no longer an issue.

“Don't worry, it doesn't last forever. Don't panic, and let them lead the way and go with the flow.”

“It will not be as bad as you imagine. Sing a lot. A sense of humour is advised!”



### Tip 10 - Stay Positive.

A positive mind-set can make a huge difference to how well you can cope:

“RELAX - nothing will be as you expect nor want. But enjoy!”

“Don't expect too much. The early days are very hard and exhausting. If everyone is fed and clean you are doing an amazing job!”

“You are stronger than you know and will find patience you didn't know you had... and love in a way you didn't know was possible!”

## LINKS TO OTHER SUPPORTIVE CHARITIES

### Working Families

The UK's leading charity helping families with work life balance.

[www.workingfamilies.org.uk](http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk)

### cry-sis

A national charity that provides advice and support to families with crying, sleepless or demanding babies. The national helpline number is 0845 1228669, open 365 days a year, 9am - 10pm.

[www.cry-sis.org.uk](http://www.cry-sis.org.uk)

### Bliss

Bliss is the UK charity working to provide the best possible care and support for all premature and sick babies. They offer a wide range of free and confidential private advice and information for the families of babies born 'too soon, too small or too sick'. Services include a helpline, counselling, a message board and help in your local area.

[www.bliss.org.uk](http://www.bliss.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](http://www.home-start.org.uk/findsupport/search)

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