

FAQs for Partners of Women who have had Twins, Triplets or More!

Answers to frequent questions asked by partners of women who have had (or are expecting) twins, triplets or more. You should also read Tamba's [Information for Partners' factsheet](#) and [personal stories](#) that we produced along with these FAQs.

FAQ 1 - What are my paternity leave and work rights?

In the UK partners are entitled to a maximum paternity leave of two weeks and this must be taken in a single block. This leave cannot start before the birth, and must be taken within 56 days of the birth (www.gov.uk/paternity-pay-leave).

Many partners feel two weeks is not long enough, and choose to save up annual leave in order to be able to take more time off to spend with the new family.

“Store up as much annual leave as possible so that you can take leave after paternity leave. Paternity Leave can only be taken in a two week block. This includes weekends and bank holidays. So start the paternity with a few days of a holiday.”

“Use holiday as well as paternity leave. It's definitely not enough time.”

“Stagger your return to work following paternity leave by taking a few days annual leave each week. This allows you to gradually ease back into it.”

For babies born after April 2015, there is a new government initiative called 'shared parental leave and pay' (www.gov.uk/shared-parental-leave-and-pay). This allows partners to 'share' the right to have paid time off of work

during their children's first year. This can only be accessed if the mother stops taking maternity payments and returns to work. At this point any weeks left unused of her maternity entitlement can be taken by you instead. There is a set rate for this leave similar to that of maternity payments.

In addition if you have been employed for more than a year at your current job, you will be eligible to take unpaid parental leave if required. See www.gov.uk/parental-leave. This can total up to 18 weeks for each child, up to their 18th birthday. The idea of this is to enable you to 'look after your children's welfare' and can include reasons such as spending more time with your family or settling your children into new childcare.

If you choose to, and can afford to take some of this type of leave, it must be taken in whole weeks, but does not have to be used all at once. You may have up to four weeks unpaid parental leave per child in a year. However this is unless your employer agrees otherwise, so if you need more unpaid leave than this for any reason, it is worth talking to your employer. Considerations such as these might be invaluable if you find your multiples have to spend time in hospital for example.



87% of partners in our survey were able to take paternity leave.

On average, two weeks statutory leave was supplemented by two weeks annual leave.

“Try to talk to your employer if the babies are in SCBU about leave once they come home, as well as at critical points in their care in NICU. Give them a copy of the leaflets from Tamba to help them understand the unique differences faced with twins or triplets and why an extension of paternity leave may be needed. Use the GP if necessary to sign off work to be with your family if your employer won't or can't grant extended paternity leave and it is needed due to SCBU.”

“Work part time if you possibly can so that you can spend more time with the babies and your partner.”

“Ensure you have enough leave planned from birth onwards; your two week paternity leave may be swallowed up in ICU and you may have left yourself with no time off to help mum when the babies get home!”

FAQ 2 - What do multiples really cost?

Raising two or more children, especially all at once, will always be more financially challenging than when children arrive one at time. Members of Tamba can benefit from discounts in a wide variety of shops including high street stores and baby stores. There are also discounts on travel, insurance, as well as lifestyle discounts. You can use the savings calculator to work out how much you can save by [clicking here](#).

The advice from other parents of multiples was that you do not need to buy two of everything and you do not need to buy everything new. Many items can be purchased on auction sites such as Ebay. Local mother and toddler second hand sales are another great source of reasonably priced clothes, toys and equipment. The one piece of new kit that is advised to purchase are new mattresses, it is a good idea to read the information on the [Lullaby Trust website](#) to ensure you follow the Safe Sleep advice.

There may also be some support available from the government if you are on a low income. For example the [Sure Start Maternity Grant](#) is still available to help with some of the initial costs, if this is your first baby, you are expecting multiples, and you are in receipt of certain benefits. This can only be claimed up to three months after the babies are born, but can be claimed eleven weeks before they are due. Logic says it may be a good idea to get this application out of the way before the birth if you can to make sure you do not run out of time and miss out.

Other government schemes may alter the amount you are entitled to, depending on your circumstances and the number of children you have. The [Money Advice Service](#) is a good place to go if you are not sure what help is available to you or are worried about money in any way. It is run by the government and offers free and impartial advice, online tools, calculators and guides as well as telephone, online and face-to-face support. Again preparation is key and a good suggestion from one of our

parents is to get paperwork completed as much as possible before the birth, as you may have a delay in finding the time to do so afterwards!

“**Stock up on nappies, formula and baby clothes well ahead of time. Being prepared and not having to spend money on those items after they are born helps - there will be plenty of other expenses.”**

“**We are only have one income coming into the house and we have had to borrow money off our parents to get through to the end of each month.”**

“**Financial costs for the first two years are monstrous, and the law is stupid, the second twin is not your first child, but your second child, as if you were ever able to recycle or reuse any of the things you use with your first child.”**

“**Buy bigger size clothing from another twin mum.”**



FAQ 3 - Just how hard is it really?

Being a parent is wonderful and rewarding but also a challenging and life changing experience. 40% of partners in our survey said what they wished they had known was just how demanding and exhausting having multiples was really going to be. Over 76% said that tiredness and lack of sleep was the hardest thing to cope with!

“**People tell you about the lack of sleep. I wish I'd believed them!”**

Many partners told us that they had been advised by health professionals and others that the early days would be tough; however they had not taken this

advice on board fully. They also said that they had underestimated just how involved they would need to be in the care of their twins, triplets or more. The reality is that two or more babies at once is hard work. You won't really know the full extent until they are here. However it is also one of the most precious, unique and rewarding experiences you will ever go through. So don't forget in the midst of your toughest hours and days, to take a step back and try to enjoy your children and focus on making memories that will last for a lifetime.

Don't worry if it all feels like it is too much, you are under a lot of pressure and you shouldn't expect too much from yourself. Ask for more help if you can.

Remember Tamba is here to support you and your family during this challenging time. You can call Tamba's free helpline, Twinline, on 0800 138 0509. It is open 365 days a year from 10am to 1pm and 7pm to 10pm. Whether you are calling about concerns during your pregnancy, when you are feeling a little overwhelmed in the early days or when you are coping with the challenges of the toddler years or teenage years, Twinline's trained volunteers are there to listen and support you. All are mums of twins or triplets themselves.

If you feel overwhelmed, you can also seek support from someone like cry-sis. Cry-sis specifically provides advice and support with crying, sleepless or demanding babies. Their advice line number is 0845 122 8669, seven days a week, 9am to 10pm.

33% of partners in our survey said they struggled emotionally with depression or anxiety after the birth of their multiple babies.

Many partners told us about how much attention twins, triplets or more create. As soon as you leave the house with that double pushchair (or more), it is as if the general public are magnetised to you! You won't be able to avoid it, so try and enjoy it!

Multiples seem to come hand in hand with a consistent stream of (not always appropriate) questions and comments from everyone you come into contact with. Common questions include whether the babies were conceived naturally, whether they were born premature, how were they born, and of course whether your twins are identical or not! Remember you do not have to

“Twins fascinate people. I never expected that doing anything in public draws people’s attention, questions, comments and smiles. You’re very visible.”

Life with twins, triplets or more comes with a multitude of challenges: navigating double buggies around public spaces, keeping track on two strong-willed toddlers adamant on running in different directions, how to approach potty training and deciding whether to put your twins in the same or different classes at school. However in time you will learn many tricks on how to minimise the stress and maximise the joy. Your education started here.

“A lot of shops, train stations and restaurants are not equipped for larger buggies or two high chairs!”

“Don’t presume that you can fit two car seats in your newly purchased estate car!”



FAQ 4 - How will I know if I’m ready?

No single situation, person, or family will ever be the same. There is only so much you can do to prepare yourself for the arrival of multiples, but the fact that you

have taken the time to read this (and hopefully lots of other sources of information) shows that you are motivated already to do the best for your children and partner.

“You don’t need to worry about every eventuality - just deal with it as it comes.”

“Nothing really fully prepared me for the arrival of my twins. I have learnt to enjoy the challenge; every day is a learning experience.”

“I think it will always be a voyage of discovery.”

LINKS TO OTHER SUPPORTIVE CHARITIES

Working Families

A charity that helps parents, carers and their employers find a better balance between responsibilities at home and work. Tamba have developed a number of video clips with this charity on maternity rights and benefits which you can find on the Tamba website in the pregnancy section.

www.workingfamilies.org.uk

Family Lives

A national family support charity providing help and support in all aspects of family life, including those expecting twins or more, and a 'becoming a dad' section.

www.familylives.org.uk/advice/pregnancy-and-baby/becoming-a-dad

www.familylives.org.uk/advice/pregnancy-and-baby/pregnancy-birth/pregnant-with-twins

The Fatherhood Institute

The Fatherhood Institute is one of the most respected fatherhood organisations in the world. A registered UK charity (number 1075104), our work focuses on policy, research and practice. Our vision is of a society in which there’s a great

dad for every child. The UK’s think and do tank for fatherhood.

www.fatherhoodinstitute.org

OnePlusOne

OnePlusOne is a UK charity that creates resources that strengthen relationships. Based on the latest research evidence, their work promotes early action in relationship support.

www.oneplusone.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

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>