

Seven Personal Stories from Fathers of Twins

Fathers of twins share their personal experiences below. You should also read our [Information for Partners](#) factsheet and our [Partners FAQs](#) that Tamba produced along with these personal stories.

Paul Hulme, dad to twins plus older sibling, shares his story:

I'm a dad to boy/girl twins Zach and Bethany who are 33 months old. They are the younger brother and sister to Maxwell who is six.

When Maxwell was three his mum and I thought we would try to give him a little brother or sister, never thinking we would give him one of each! From having all we needed for one sibling we were now one short of everything. It was like starting all over. We made the decision to find out the sex of the babies so we could plan for their arrival. To find out it was one of each was exciting and ensured they would be different in every way from that moment forward.

Maxwell was excited but like me and his mum had no idea how it would change the lives of us all. The babies were born at 37 weeks after mum was induced, they were good weights (6lb 6oz & 6lb 12oz). They were born healthy so all the books we'd read on premature births could now be given back to the hospital.

After two days in hospital we were on our way home. How are we going to sleep, function, get Maxwell to school, shop, see friends, watch the football, were all thoughts rushing through my head as I proudly carried out a blue and pink bundle from the hospital. I could hear whispers from other new parents pointing out the obvious "look twins". This was now my life.



Michelle and I had no choice but to work together. We functioned sometimes like robots, feed, change, wind, and bath repeatedly. Before we knew it we were three months in and our babies were getting bigger, stronger it was now the norm.

Maxwell played his part, passing nappies, bottles, new baby grows - we were a complete family all supporting one another. We were doing things that six months ago we thought were not possible: shopping, eating out, Maxwell's homework and swimming. It was all challenging but there is a way to make it work.

Now with the twins nearly three and Maxwell nearly seven we are set to embark on our first family holiday abroad. All the fears we once had are now replaced with new fears and as a parent I know we will always have fears

regarding our children, just different ones as they grow up. I'm proud to be a twin dad, never anything I would have chosen to do, but like anything in life you deal with the hand you are given. It's tough, it's tiring, it's fun, and it's being a Dad.

First time dad, Alan Lambert, shares his babies' dramatic entry into the world:

I'm a dad to wonderful dual-nationality bilingual (French / English) boy (Briac) / girl (Elyne) twins. They are now three years old and we moved from UK to France a year ago, but despite being overseas we are still Tamba members and still follow Tamba on Facebook and read the great articles they share.

We conceived by IVF after several years of trying and as my wife suffers from endometriosis she had an operation before we attempted the IVF. Throughout this long and draining process, and indeed right up to the implantation, we were told that multiples carried high risk and asked if we were sure we fully understood the risks we were taking. We always nodded knowingly but actually we were clueless. Nothing you read, or are told, really prepares you.

A surreal memory I'll fondly keep for life is that I sat on a cold station platform waiting for a train into London

hugging (literally hugging) the incubator box containing my wife's eggs. It was warm, but even then there was something paternal and protectionist about accompanying that precious package into the clinic from the hospital where my wife was just coming out of surgery. It's odd to think that in there, sat in a warm box on my lap, were the eggs that gave life to my twin Dad experience. I remember that first scan. I remember being on my knees next to my wife to be down at her level during the scan and giggling like a five year-old when we first saw two little 'beans' on the screen.

The next few months went by so quickly. I'm certainly doing my wife's pregnancy, and the Tamba sessions we attended, a huge injustice but I'm going to skip a few months on to the birth. We went in for one of the many, many scans. I'd tried to be off work for as many as possible, particularly after we'd had a bit of a scare at 28 weeks. The twins were now 33 weeks. We were told their growth had continued to slow, that my wife had protein in her urine, and that they wanted to admit her to keep an eye on things. That's I think probably when things started to feel a bit more real and scary.

My wife was confirmed as having pre-eclampsia. They told her they were keeping her in hospital and would try and keep the twins inside for another week. The weekend came and went and, on the assurance it would be a few more days, I went in to work.

The day started with a text saying my wife's results had taken a turn for the worse and they'd do a C-Section that evening. As the morning passed the successive texts became more alarming. They needed to do a blood transfusion before surgery. They would need to do the C-Section under general anaesthetic. They weren't waiting anymore, get here quick..! At which point I did the mad dash across London to get to the hospital. At least I share that experience with the other Dads!

Due to my wife's poor condition and the circumstances of the birth I wasn't allowed into theatre. I was therefore given a chair in a stark cold corridor outside of the operating theatre. My wife was in good hands. They had

doctors, nurses, midwives galore in there with her. A Consultant for her, paediatricians and midwives for each of the babies. As I sat there I knew this was it, I was about to become 'Daddy'.

The time passed so slowly. Finally I heard the first screams from inside. Then a red light flashes above the door, and in addition to the dozens of people already in there, dozens more start running in, with incubator trolleys in tow. I sat numb and sobbing in the corridor wanting someone to reassure me that all was ok. Someone eventually did. The twenty minutes or so I sat there waiting though felt like an eternity.

Despite the drama, the birth actually was quite smooth. My son Briac was supposed to be twin one. My fiercely independent daughter Elyne had better ideas. No sooner they had sliced my wife open and she thrust her legs out apparently. She had a few breathing difficulties when they first tended to her, so that's why they hit the cavalry button, but she was soon swaddled up with her brother.



My twin parenting experience then started with a stark choice: a smiling midwife wheels in the babies in those little trolleys and says (and I'm not paraphrasing), "Congratulations! Which one are you going to feed first?" Realisation suddenly hits. My wife is just coming around from major surgery under general anaesthetic and I have two premature babies who avoided

SCBU by a mere 40g to feed.

To this day I'm not 100% sure who I fed first. Elyne because she was first born, or Briac because he was the smallest of the two? Can't tell you. That precise moment is where the memory loss kicked in, and the days and months blurred into each other. Whoever it was I remember the experience distinctly. I felt so totally unprepared. I knew how to hold a bottle. But neither of my twins would be bottle feeding just yet. They needed to be cup fed. I felt completely out of my depth, but learnt quickly to adapt, to forget the comfort of professional life and being able to do things you know how to do and have a control over the outcome. Suffice to say I was out of my comfort zone. However, it was a magical moment and despite being very hard to see my wife taking a few days to come out of 24-hour observation hooked up to machines with constant alarms and warnings (her pre-eclampsia in fact had become severe, and it was only after I realised how serious the risks were for her - it took her months to fully get back to full health), I actually had the privilege of being the first one to do all the new baby rituals. First nappies, first cuddles, first skin to skin and first feeding.

Many singleton Dads talk of feeling a bit like a spare part, watching their wife / partner dealing with all these major milestones, but I have some special memories of my roles in the first few days with my babies.

My paternity leave went too quickly. My annual leave also flew by and after three weeks I had to get back to work. The next few months flew by. A good night's sleep meant getting more than two hours of uninterrupted sleep and only doing the feeds after 3am. A bad night meant being up every hour throughout the night and barely shutting your eyes for 30 minutes at a time. And then getting up at 6.30am to go to work. There were mornings I was too 'zombified' to drive, and I knew I had to brave the train.

As a twin parent, you do what you have to do. Being a twin Dad is an amazing experience and has made me a stronger person, a proud Dad and I hope a better husband.

First time dad, Bryn Regan, shares his tips for coping with twins:

I'm a dad to twins, Abigail & Oliver, who are now four years old. They are our first and only children and so we don't know any different. We were lucky in that they went through the full term of the pregnancy and spent only a short time in hospital.

Those early days were hard work as a new parent, learning what to do and essentially doing everything twice. We don't have family nearby so had to become self-sufficient as quickly as possible. I remember not getting much sleep as we would share the feeding during the night and spent most of the first year in a sleep deprived daze.



I used to change four nappies before leaving to go to work in the mornings so it wasn't long before I was an expert. Having a very large nappy bin saved us some valuable time as we wouldn't have to empty it every day. I also remember continually washing bottles and getting hold of a second kettle so that well-meaning visitors making a cup of tea didn't use the boiling water we were waiting to cool.

Getting out and about was important even in those early days even though it could take some time to prepare. Given that we had less time to do anything it was necessary to just accept we couldn't get everything done and that was ok. As

long as we had the basics sorted, we could get out and enjoy ourselves doing different things. We also had to accept early on that you can't always keep both babies happy at the same time when you're on your own. So having one baby crying was not unusual and not something to panic about.

Probably the most important and sanity-saving thing we did early on was settle into some form of routine. We established a bath and bedtime routine with bed around 7pm which gave us our evenings back, and the chance to catch up together after a hard day looking after the babies or working. It feels like an age since they came along and we've watched them grow into two very loving children who are full of life and are about to start school. In short, it's been hard work but well worth it. The whole experience has been fantastic.

David Christie, a father to girl / boy twins, tells us how he used his past experience to help him cope in the early days:

I have three year-old twins; a girl and a boy. I don't have other children. Before they were born I was a lawyer working in commercial disputes in Edinburgh and Glasgow. We moved to Aberdeen just before our due date, and I became a lecturer. So, when people ask how things changed when we had twins, it is quite difficult to say too much because, about that time, everything changed.

In some ways, my previous job was good preparation for the first few months of having twins; the intensity of having to try and focus and manage your time - when the demands of a 'client' might change quickly and without warning and over a long, long day felt familiar at that stage. It was like dealing with a big court case. So, to that extent, while it was tough going, I felt like I could manage it. Moving into a more predictable working environment, with more fixed working hours, has also helped.

My wife and I sometimes try and imagine what we would have done if we had not made those change; it's almost impossible to imagine.

What I found harder than the very early weeks, which I was sort of prepared for, was that while the most acute pressure of the early months did ease - it was a big thing for us when we got them into a bit of a bedtime routine - the overall intensity still stayed high after the excitement and adrenaline of the birth wore off. I wasn't as prepared for that and it was more of a case of 'hanging tough' and taking the difficult days as they come, as best as you can.

In hindsight, I think that some advice I got when I was in the early stages of the two year training period to become a solicitor would have been helpful: the first month seems to last forever; the first six months take an eternity but after that, the time hurtles past. I've found being a father a bit like that. The first six months needed a bit of digging deep for both experiences and, for both, I lived in constant terror of not doing the right thing but then it all accelerated and I began to get a feel for what's what. Having said that, when people said at the time, "It gets easier"; it never felt like that in either case!

I've tried hard to make the most of it and I think I have, but you can always do more.

First time dad, Mike Birtwistle, on how twins' dads get to be at the heart of things:

I'm a dad to three-year-old boy / girl twins. Hank and Lila are our only children, so I can't make any direct comparison with being a dad to a single baby. However I can say this; having observed friends with one baby, it is easy for the dad to become a bit of a bystander. With two, there is never that excuse. Be it feeding, changing, cuddling or playing, there is always an opportunity (and indeed a demand!) to be at the heart of things. Take this opportunity - you'll probably only get it once.

At the beginning, everything seems difficult. You have to learn a load of new things at a time when you are emotional and sleep-deprived. Yet soon, what felt like a massive trauma - changing a nappy, feeding, getting out of the house for a walk or getting a little one to sleep - becomes second nature. You won't recognise these triumphs at first, because they will be accompanied by the arrival other challenges, but one day you'll pause and realise that, without even noticing, you have become a fully functional dad.



My advice would be enjoy it as much as possible (it goes all too fast), throw yourself into it (you'll get more out of it that way) and be kind to your partner (there'll be times when you don't want to be kind to each other, but these will be the times when you both need kindness the most).

And, finally, congratulations! Being a dad to multiples is an amazing thing and watching them grow, learn and love together is pretty special. It will seem tough at times, but there is never a day when the rewards don't far outweigh the challenges.

First time dad, David, shares his change of lifestyle that came from the arrival of his non-identical twin girls.

I'm a father to non-identical twin girls; our first children. They were born ten weeks premature and are now seven-and-a-half months old. They spent six weeks in the NICU ward at the Norfolk

and Norwich Hospital, where they (and we) received, and continue to receive, brilliant care.

One of our girls was diagnosed with periventricular leukomalacia (PVL) while she was on the ward, which means that she is at a high risk of having cerebral palsy. We are already experiencing developmental delays with her; it's a constant source of anxiety. But the early diagnosis means that she is getting support from a number of therapists from a very young age, and we are hopeful that she will catch up in time; and day-to-day, needless to say, both the girls are an absolute delight, so worries tend to be confined to the dark hours of the night and early morning.

My wife and I are very lucky to live on a smallholding in rural Norfolk, and luckier still that my mother-in-law gave up half of her house for us. Having her next door has been a real godsend and that we don't have rent or a mortgage to pay means that I have been able to work part-time and take a full share of parenting duties.

For medical reasons, the girls are formula fed, so I've been able to be fully involved with feeding and everything right from the start. We felt fortunate to have great support with feeding (and looking after new-borns in general) from staff at the hospital, so we didn't feel thrown in at the deep end in the same way many new parents must. My wife is a writer, and we try to arrange things so that she gets a day or two a week free to work on her second novel while I look after the girls.

We've been lucky sleep-wise (one of our two - touch wood - has been sleeping through the night for some weeks), but we are still pretty exhausted a lot of the time. I think this presents the biggest challenge for any new parent, let alone new parents of twins: exhaustion can easily lead to grumpiness and arguments. We've found the easiest way to avoid this is to immediately admit it when you're tired and stressed: a simple exclamation of, "I'm GRUMPY," seems always to lead directly to smiles and a renewal of the 'united front' that we try to maintain. We've also split things so that my wife does anything that needs doing in the

night, while I do the early mornings. That way she gets a lie-in on days when I'm not at work and can catch up on sleep.

Paul Doherty, dad to twin boys, tells us how being a twin dad has made him a better dad:

I became a first time dad, aged 30, to twin boys. I remember the shock the first time the sonographer casually started talking about baby number two like it was something we should both know about; I was completely shocked whilst my wife was overjoyed after hoping for twins since we discovered the pregnancy.

We did a lot of reading in the months leading up to the birth as we knew that there would be little chance for these things once the babies were born. The one thing that I hadn't quite realised from our reading was just how much our lives would be turned upside down by these two 6lb new-borns. Our first few days in the hospital were a little strange as I needed to leave our new arrivals at the end of visiting time and not see them again until the next morning.

Our little ones were continually crying in those first few days and although the midwives were great, it took one in particular to realise that they weren't getting enough food from breastfeeding alone and she told us that we should dual feed (bottle and breast). This helped, a lot, and we were able to get them home on day five. At that point I hadn't seen the night time scenario but I was told about it each day when I went in so I knew that we were in for a period of disruption - I just didn't expect it to last six months!

We followed the advice from the information we'd read that advocated waking both twins once one twin had woken for a feed. Both of us would get up and whilst my wife gave the first baby a cuddle I would go and make the bottles. Then we'd wake up baby

number two and my wife could start breastfeeding whilst I made sure she had everything she needed - drink, TV remote, phone and kindle.

Meanwhile I'd be keeping myself busy as I knew that soon I'd be helping with bottle feeding, winding and nappy changing and perhaps repeating the cycle before they went back to sleep. It felt surreal to be sterilising bottles, washing dishes or watching one of our favourite programmes at 3am and it was even more surreal when I realised this had become the routine.

This next bit may sound a little unusual but the strange thing is - I'm glad of that experience. When I compare myself to friends with singletons, it's normally mum who will do the night-time feeds and get the opportunity for the late night bonding. The only exception to that may be one or two days at the weekend when dad does his bit and gives mum the chance to rest.

If we hadn't had twins, I, in all likelihood, would have fallen into that same pattern. Having twins meant that from the very first time they cried there was no option other than to jump in and be a major part of their lives. In all honesty I think that being a dad of twins involved me much more and probably made me a better dad as a result.

TAKE A LOOK AT OUR PARTNERS' FACTSHEET

Tamba has put together a factsheet called 'Information for Partners' that is packed full of useful tips and information for dads and partners of women who've had (or are expecting) twins, triplets or more.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

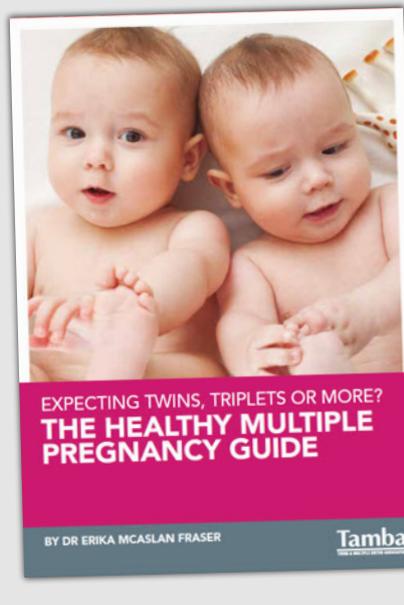
Accompanying the factsheet and these Personal Stories are Tamba's FAQs for Partners. It features detailed answers to questions frequently asked by dads and partners.

ESSENTIAL READING FROM TAMBA

Tamba has put together a number of booklets packed full of useful information and well worth a read.

Here are three of those booklets. Just click on the pictures to download them for free from Tamba's website.

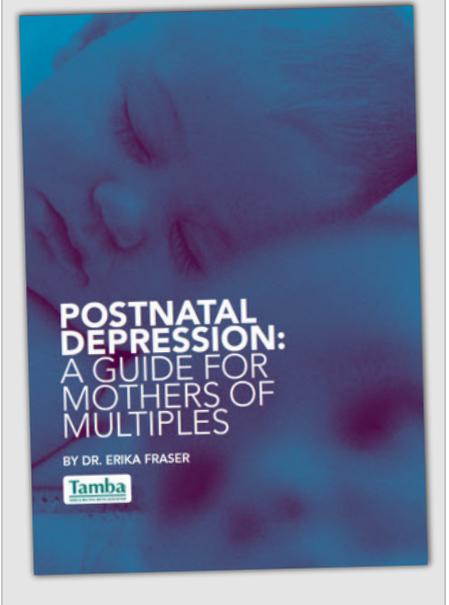
The Healthy Multiple Pregnancy Guide



Preparing for Parenthood



Postnatal Depression



Remember that you can also call **Twinline** on 0800 138 0509. Twinline is Tamba's free telephone helpline open every day, 365 days a year from 10am to 1pm and 7pm to 10pm. Whether you are calling about concerns during your partner's pregnancy, in the early days when you are feeling a little overwhelmed 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 parents of twins or triplets themselves.

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>