



St Albans & District Twins Club



Top Tips for Twins & Triplets

From 0-5 years

www.twinsclubstalbans.co.uk

All opinions expressed in this booklet are personal tips and advice received from individual members of the Twins Club. They are provided for informational purposes only, and are not necessarily endorsed by the Twins Club or Tamba. Some may not be appropriate for your particular circumstances, and you should use your own common sense in deciding what works best for you, in conjunction with advice from your health visitor and other professionals.

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INTRODUCTION



Welcome to the updated St Albans & District Twins Club Top Tips booklet. By bringing together the wealth of experience of our club members, we hope we have produced a useful and informative booklet. It is specifically aimed at new parents, carers and relatives of multiples and hopes to offer practical advice on those day-to-day issues, which can arise when you have to deal with more than one baby at a time.

All the tips are from individual Club members and have been edited only to reduce length. It may sound like some tips contradict each other - and indeed some do. Every mum of multiples develops her preferred way of doing things. Whereas these tips may give you some great ideas, no doubt you will find our own 'best way' too over the months/years - and undoubtedly come up with some new tips of your own.

But the trouble is when you have the tips, you are in the thick of it and don't have time to write them down. When you do have time to write them down, you have also moved on and they just somehow drift out of your memory as other new issues take over.

If you do have new tips, ideas, information or comments please e-mail them to me at tess@gatens.co.uk. Don't wait until the next update of this booklet, as you'll have forgotten them by then!

Tess Gatens
Editor



PREGNANCY

One of the best things to do (actually at any stage) is make contact with other mums-to-be, especially those expecting multiples. You'll soon find others who are going through exactly the same experiences and struggles as you!

- Organise your equipment and help well in advance.
- Invest in a mobile phone and a cordless phone at home.
- Warn your employer you may have to take maternity leave early. Consider using your holiday entitlement so you can avoid starting maternity leave too early
- Because you can get so big, allow extra time for going anywhere e.g. shopping, appointments, etc.
- Buy maternity clothes at least one or two sizes bigger than your normal size. Plus large and long tops.
- If you drive, it may become impossible for you to fit your bump safely or comfortably behind the steering wheel of your car. Be prepared to commandeer a chauffeur or take taxis.
- When parking in a car park, wherever possible, park next to things that can't be moved e.g. pillars. This will prevent you getting back to your car and finding you can no longer get your door open.
- When flying off for your final holiday without twins, you may find the bump gets in the way of the airline foldout tray!

- Start a recipe file for meals that take 30 minutes or less to prepare. If you have the freezer space available (use relatives, friends, neighbours) pre-cook meals that can be re-heated once you are home from the hospital.
- Don't be tempted to refuse social engagements set for around your due dates. You can always cancel if you can't go but it's awful to be left twiddling your thumbs if the pregnancy runs overtime - it's not all that common but it can happen with twins.
- It is possible that you will get very large and heavy and find it amazingly tiring just walking a few yards, climbing or even descending a few stairs. You can find yourself completely breathless after what you might think is a ridiculously silly distance! Due to the enormous physical effort required, going upstairs at home can become something you only do once a day - at bedtime.
- Talk to relatives or friends about babysitting the babies before they are born. You will need the break and a chance to just be 'husband and wife' alone together.
- Book antenatal class in plenty of time as twins can arrive earlier than singletons. Look out for those specifically for multiples.
- Focus on the end result - 2 (or more) gorgeous bubs.
- Sleep with loads of pillows for support.
- Practice fitting the baby car seats into your car. Make sure your car is big enough for all the seats, particularly if you have another child/children.
- Check out local agencies that offer help/support, eg doulas, night nannies etc
- Towards the end 30/32 weeks you may need an afternoon nap. This is a good opportunity to test out babysitters for siblings.

- Swimming is wonderful, a glorious relief to have the weight supported for you while you're in the water. Brace yourself for when you get out though - it feels as if someone's got hold of your tummy from underneath and won't let go. Also be prepared for the pool staff to view you with alarm - if you're very big they might think you're contemplating a DIY water birth!
- Take it easy if possible and take advice on stopping working
- Stock up on ready made meals or make a load of food before the twins are born. We did receive a hamper and it was wonderful.
- If you can afford one - arrange a house cleaner!
- Make contact with other parents expecting twins - make use of the contact Mum facility available within the twins club
- Go on a tour of the maternity ward in your hospital. Ask about any single rooms, how they handle c-sections, and ask to see SCBU so you can see what to expect. Tell them you are expecting twins and you may get an individual tour.

HOSPITAL AND SPECIAL CARE

- When in the hospital, don't be afraid to ask for explanations for what the nurses/doctors are doing. They're there to help you and your babies, and will be happy to explain their roles. Ask nurses to explain the terminology used on your babies charts. No question is silly about your child/childrens care.
- Ask to be shown how to breastfeed and bath your babies, and change a nappy (if you've never done it before)
- Try to get involved in the babies care as much as possible;

this can be done by helping to wash the babies, change nappies, by expressing milk, lots of cuddles and skin-to-skin contact.

- Find out about shift time changes to maximise the amount of time you want to spend in SCBU with your babies; apparently some units ask parents to wait outside during shift changes.
- Remember to look after yourself too, your babies need you to be as well as possible so don't forget to eat and drink plenty to ensure your health and energy levels are as good as they can be.
- Ask for help if you need it.
- Spend as much time at the hospital as you feel you need to. You will need to recover mentally and physically and be ready for when they come home.
- Take photos
- Talk to your babies



COMING HOME WITH TWO—OR MORE!

- Organise any help, relatives, friends, neighbours, nannies, au pairs, cleaners, ironers, cooks, internet shopping etc.
- Organise a rota for help and visitors.
- Rather than buying presents, ask friends/family to contribute to paid help at home for the first few weeks at least.

- Have a shopping list available to hand to a willing volunteer.
- 4.30 - 7.00pm can be horrid, so any help here would be good.
- Take up people on offers of help. If you have visitors , accept help with housework etc.
- When twins are born you do get inundated with presents. Ask for a meal so there is no need to cook one night.
- Try to arrange care for siblings for when you come home as well as while you are away.
- If you've had a caesarean you're not suppose to drive for 6 weeks, so organise a chauffeur.
- Give yourself time—don't expect to be 'supermum'.

FEEDING

The angst over your children and their eating habits will go on from now until they leave home! With the benefit of hindsight the first 6 months are relatively straightforward - at least they can't throw it at you yet!

Feeding routines

- Routine is key - keep a notebook of times and amounts of feed each baby has had. This will reassure you in the early days and can help you to establish a routine.
- Adhere to strict timed routines so you are not up all night (lots of will power required but it will pay off!).
- Work towards getting their routines the same if possible, even if it means waking one. If bottle feeding/mixed feeding, try and involve your partner in doing the late evening feed so that

you can get an early night and be ready for the early morning wake up.

- Night-time feeding can be less lonely with text messages to your friends—chances are someone else is also awake!

Sort yourself out first

Getting yourself organised for feeding is the first task to consider

- Get yourself comfortable with everything you need within reach before you start feeding (ie. TV remote, drink, food!).
- Try not to be interrupted - answer machine on, mobile off etc..
- Use a thermal insulated cup with lid (available from camping shops) so that you can have a hot drink

Getting in position



Feeding both at once saves a lot of time - but you'll need to devise a way of getting them in the right positions on cushions/pillows etc - which can be very tricky without someone to help! Most people come up with their own tried and tested methods:

- Use a 'v' shaped pillow to support the babies. Avoid taking the weight of the babies heads in your hands.
- Boppy cushions are very good as they easily support the weight of twins
- Three seater sofas - take out middle cushion sit on base and the twins lie on cushion on either side - ideal for breast-feeding.
- Put one baby in a bouncy chair on the couch facing you sideways,

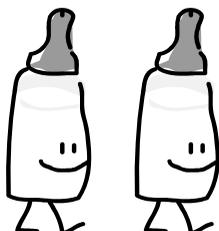
the other baby-sits on your lap facing away, alternate positions with each feed.

- Feed one in arms and one in fold of legs when new-born.
- Feed both in bouncy chairs in front of you (and watch telly).
- Prop both on cushions on the couch.
- Alternate who gets held when feeding.
- Sit on the floor and lean a baby on each of your thighs.
- Sitting them in children's bean bag chairs are a great way of giving them drinks/milk at the same time when they can hold their own bottles.

Breast feeding

- Breast feeding can be a thirsty business so drink plenty during the day and night.
- Have your cupboards well stocked as you will not believe how hungry you will get.
- Snacks of cheese, nuts and raisins are handy, quick for energy when you are too busy to eat, as are muesli bars or similar
- What you eat can affect their feeding - but not necessarily both of them. One could be upset by citrus and the other by onions! Monitor your diet.
- When nursing simultaneously, put the stronger one on first. This will get your milk flowing so the weaker baby won't have to work so hard.
- Don't allocate each twin a breast—alternate with each feed .
- Don't beat yourself up if your babies prefer the bottle.

- Use a muslin like a bib tucked into your top to try and preserve some of your dignity in public!
- If you are expressing milk, don't buy an expensive breast pump, the Twins Club can lend you one (for a limited period).



Bottle feeding

- If you can't breast feed, or simply don't have enough for two, remember, formula is not poison.
- Putting different coloured elastic bands on the bottle necks or different colour plastic neck bands prevents the bottles from being mixed up. Or always associate one baby with the left and the other with the right. You can apply this to anything.
- Giving milk at room temperature from the start can make life easier when out and about.
- Formula can be made up at the beginning of the day and kept in bottles in the fridge. If you haven't the space for bottles make up into a jug with a lid. Formula can be safely stored in the fridge for 24 hours. If possible, delegate the making up of a day's supply of milk.
- If warming milk, stand the bottle in a container with hot water if you don't have a bottle warmer.
- Rinse bottle and teat immediately after use. Wash and sterilise later in a batch.
- Gives bottles at room temp. Just fill the bottles with boiled

water and make up the feed when needed.

- A small-insulated cool bag can be useful for storing bottles when going out, or bottles can be wrapped inside the nappy bags or changing mat.
- Have hot water flask with cold mix already in bottle next to bed. Add hot water & shake: ready to use.
- Use two bouncy chairs side by side and you can give bottles at the same time
- Bottle feed at night, breastfeed at day (takes less time, more filling)
- Get a baby kettle- means there is always cooled boiled water to hand if you need to make up another bottle or wipe eyes.
- When old enough to hold bottle: leave bottle in cot - they can help themselves during the night
- Steam sterilizers are excellent, you can squeeze in more items than actually stated and is very quick to do a cycle.
- Bottle with disposable liners can be handy and sanitary.
- If using only powdered milk, introducing cooled boiled water as well can help to avoid constipation.
- Use ready-made formula milk as a time saver. Though expensive, it doesn't need refrigerating until opened and then keeps for 24 hours.
- Little cartons of ready-made formula are convenient when out and about - remember the scissors for opening!
- Baby bibs are useful as spills and dribbles are unavoidable.
- Find out what teats and formula milk the hospital will use and have this for the first few days at home.

Dealing with siblings

- Keep a box of special toys for older children handy to keep them busy while you are feeding.
- All watch a video together
- If bottle feeding, get siblings to help
- 'While baby feeds, sibling reads'.
- There's a lot of CBeeBies etc involved in the early days!

STARTING TO WEAN

When it starts getting messy - think of ways to amuse or distract the little darlings to enable you to shovel the food in.



- Annabel Karmel's books give good guidelines
- You will need small pots to freeze food in rather than tiny ice cubes! Petit Filous pots work well.
- Don't rush things—if they can't manage lumpy food, stick with purees for a while longer. It will happen.
- When starting to wean, you can use one spoon and one bowl, and feed the babies alternately.
- There is going to be a mess so just accept it and enjoy!
- Table seats and Bumbo seats are brilliant for sitting them in when they're too small for a highchair.
- You can always miss out the lump stage, and skip from purees to finger foods.

- Keep highchairs far enough apart so the children aren't interfering with each other.
- Adjustable trays on high chairs are handy for their different stages and STRAP THEM IN.
- Tie-on buggy books are great distraction when attached to a high chair/booster seat
- Get baby used to eating jars of food for when you are out (cold as well as warm).
- Give baby their own spoon even if not capable of controlling it yet. Practise makes perfect, also it will distract them as you get the food into them!
- Mugs/Beakers - cups with special valves which almost stops them leaking completely and screw lids are sometimes less frustrating to use than some of the 'Anyway Up cup' lids, which are sometimes very difficult to get off.
- When they start to drink full fat milk, at a year old, try and give it to them out of a beaker and dispense with bottles.
- Use plastic mats (old shower curtains are good) for under the highchairs to protect floor/carpet. Feed in the garden!
- Booster seats with trays are cheaper, take up less room, are portable and last longer.
- Colour code their frozen prepared foods using different coloured clothes pegs I.e. blue pegs for fish, red for meat, green for veg, yellow for pudding etc..
- Tuck hands down under strap of bouncy chair when feeding newly weaned in order to keep hands clean.
- To save time when feeding twins in highchairs, sit in front of them with a tray on your lap, one bowl and two spoons and feed

them using both hands.

- Start on finger foods from very early on in the hope they can feed themselves soon.
- Plastic bibs can save on loads of washing.
- Use muslins/tea towels as bibs in early days
- Eating Out - go prepared. Take some toys, crayons etc to amuse and keep them busy. Take plenty of wet wipes.

Siblings

- Feeding siblings and babies altogether can be horrendous but it gets it out of the way, otherwise it feels like a 24 hour café.
- Using jars of baby food for breakfast are quick - a consideration if you have to get siblings off to nursery/school.
- Tiny pasta shapes are good for soup and cheaper than commercial baby pasta.

GETTING DRESSED

- You don't need lots of clothes to start with as they do grow out of them quite quickly.
- Don't be too proud to accept hand-me-downs or buy clothes at nearly-new sales!
- Don't be embarrassed if your babies live in sleepsuits for the first few months - it makes life much easier and is more comfortable for them than designer separates.
- Don't worry about rushing them to dress themselves, it is



quicker and easier to do it yourself, especially during busy mornings.

- If you're given two identical outfits, you can always return one, or keep them both and wear on different days.
- Pick clothes that are easy to do up/undo. Velcro fastening shoes are much better than laces. Think easy!
- Dresses can get caught up when crawling.
- Buy trousers a size down - often the legs are far too long. Buy vests a size up to save buying another set every 3 months or so (you'll get through loads!)
- There's no standardisation with clothes sizes - they can vary greatly between shops.
- If pyjamas legs are too long, use the soft hair bands round the ankles to hold them - particularly when they start walking.
- Use clothing such as dungarees that have poppers between legs when they are little to keep them warm and tidy but once walking it is easier and quicker to take down dungarees etc. from the top as they are prone to wriggling.
- Build up relationships with charity and second-hand shops so they'll tell you what's come in.
- Don't bother doing up the middle popper on vests as you can reach down and rip it open more easily when you want to remove it.
- If staying clean is important, don't dress them until after breakfast (or lunch!).
- Do up the legs of all in ones/sleep suits before putting on wriggling legs - they can't then kick them off before you have had a chance to completely dress them.

- Get them in pyjamas sooner the better.
- Keep laundry baskets close by for clean and dirty clothing.
- All-in-one snowsuits in winter are not suitable for shopping trips, as they are too hot for babies.
- Outgrown vests/bodysuits make great dusters or rags round the house!
- Persist with rules eg wearing hats!
- Use tights on boys and girls in cold weather.
- When buying clothes, think carefully about their age and what season it is/will be when they fit. It's easy to buy the wrong things and they never get worn due to the weather.



BOTTOM BITS



- Have nappies, change mats, wipes etc both upstairs and downstairs, to save time and your legs.
- Avoid bending when changing nappies, use a table top, desk, change table.
- Buy nappies and wipes in bulk from places like Costco. Watch for sales such as buy one get one free and stock up. If in doubt about using up the smaller size before they outgrow them, go for the next size up.
- Supermarket brands are usually made by the big manufacturers anyway, and are cheaper.
- If you get a changing table buy the kind with drawers rather

than cupboards.

- Get a Boots Advantage Card and if convenient stock up on all of your baby products here. The points soon build up and you can treat yourself to a nice beauty product.
- Look out for local nappy cleaning services, and ask about a discount for twins.
- Make up the re-usable nappies in advance.
- Keep the change table and their clothes downstairs. After the laundry - no need to trek upstairs again. Upstairs have a cot-top changing mat.
- Buy or sew a bag dispenser - a tube of fabric into a tube with a drawstring at the top and elasticised at the bottom and fill with carrier bags. Ideal as a nappy bag dispenser. Remember to keep out of reach of curious toddlers.

Potties

- Dresses and vests can trail into the potty and get wet. Use short t-shirts when training and trousers/shorts with elastic waists.
- Children will indicate when ready for potty training. One will probably be ahead of the other.
- There is no right or wrong time to do it. Some prefer summer but winter may be just as easy.
- If it doesn't work the first time, or it's just too stressful for all, leave it a few months.
- Training outside in the summer can save your carpets.
- Use fold up portable toilet seats.

- Relax - don't rush it. Once you start needing to find toilets everywhere you'll realise how convenient nappies are!
- Praise lavishly if the deed is done in the toilet/potty
- Leave potties around the house so they get used to seeing them. Give them one each.
- Have potties upstairs, down stairs, in the garden - this could mean 6 potties, so try and borrow some.
- Travel potty refills are expensive - use cheap sanitary towels and nappy sacks instead.
- Gina Ford has some good tips
- Use Care Mats in pushchairs and car seats, also use under the potty.
- Consider training one at a time, especially triplets.
- Leave as late as possible (even as late as 3 $\frac{1}{4}$).

BATH TIME

- Bathing twice a week when small is adequate unless they are colicky or have trouble settling, in which case a bath may do the trick.
- Prior to bathing them, get everything ready first, clothes, baby bath towels, shampoo, next feed.
- When very young, baby shaped sponges are safe and comfortable to lay them on.
- Buy the newborn bath inserts so you can bath two babies at once - invaluable until mine were about 9 months old.



- When babies are small, an easy way to bath them is to have them both in the bathroom, one waiting, dressed and sitting in a bouncy chair while you bath the other, then swap over.
- When small, it's nice to bath one baby at a time
- Motorised swings are invaluable at bath time. Have one in the swing while you are bathing the other.
- When they are older, putting one in a baby bouncer in the bathroom doorway keeps him entertained until his turn.
- Always use a non-slip safety mat in the bath. If you use two, a square and a rectangular bath mat fit most baths. Or an extra long mat is available from places like Boots, Blooming Marvellous, or Great Little Trading company.
- When they are small they can be held in the 'swimming position' to practise kicking and gaining confidence
- When they are both able to pull themselves up and stand against something, strip them both off and put one in the bath and the other into a towelling robe. Bath one whilst the other stands against the bath and watches or plays with toys. Then lift the first one out and put into their towelling robe and put the second baby in the bath. By the time you lift the second baby out of the bath and into the robe, the first one is dry and ready to be dressed.
- If you have a sibling, bathing in the morning can be a good time, as the sibling can have a lovely long bath while you bath the babies.
- Remember bathtime can be anytime, and can help pass the time.

Bath toys

- A plastic bin with a locking lid makes an ideal place to put wet

bath toys and non-slip mats.

- Stick bath mats to wall above bath to drip dry before putting away.
- Foam alphabets that stick to the bath and walls for 3 years and above are cheap and fun. You can also use them to leave messages for the rest of the family. (Keep it clean!)
- Empty shampoo containers, measuring cups, Tupperware are cheap and fun to use as bath toys.

BEDTIME zzzzzz.....



- As soon as you feel comfortable, try to establish a routine of putting them down for a nap in the morning and afternoon.
- Train them to sleep together and wake up together. If they don't you'll be on duty all day.
- Develop a bedtime routine. This just means start doing the same set of things, in the same order, at the same time each night. This will establish 'cues' which will help the babies realise it is time to go to sleep.
- Bathing every night can be a good part of the bedtime routine, as it can wear them out.
- Bedtime - get them in a routine as soon as you can.
- Tuck double-folded muslins under their heads in bed in case they are sick in the night
- Don't go back down stairs after they have had the bath, as you will have trouble getting them upstairs again.

- Use baby grobags/sleeping bags
- Don't put warm babies into a cold bed.
- When feeding at night, change them at the same time (well not literally!)
- The time for bed can be set quite early and the babies can be given the 10pm feed in the dark as if it is night time.
- In the early months once you are in to some sort of feeding routine, consider having your partner always do the late evening feed for both twins. This means you are 'off duty' for at least a few hours, and can get your head down!
- Try to put the babies to bed when they are awake and leave them to fall asleep themselves. Establish a bed time sooner rather than later.
- Dentists prefer dummies to thumbs.
- You can use one cot to sleep both in the early days, as that is what they have been used to for the last nine months and it also saves space.
- Have a spare cot downstairs to put a screaming baby in at night.
- Sleep when they do, have naps in the afternoon.
- Bring your own sleep routine earlier to catch up with a few hours.
- Listen to the radio/tv when feeding at night.
- In the early days Moses baskets can be very handy as they are very portable, can be taken with you to visit relatives/friends, can be used to sleep them downstairs during the day to save running up and down the stairs. They are however, not essential, are short lived and are pretty expensive.

- Travel cots with bassinets may be a better investment.
- Don't tiptoe around them - get them used to vacuum, doorbell, and general noises
- Have cots in same room as they generally don't disturb each other. But keep a travel cot up somewhere in case they need separating.
- Use a 10-watt light bulb for a night-light, or use a light dimmer.
- Don't rush to go in when one wakes up - usually the other will sleep through; meanwhile the crying child may settle back down.
- You can take turns to choose a baby for the night. You then wake up and feed that one baby all night. If you are lucky, you get the baby that sleeps through!
- Take turns having the "early" and "late" shift I.e. 7pm - 1am, 1am - 7am. so you each get a block of sleep.
- Clip dummies on - you will always know where it is, it won't fall on the ground and need sterilising, an older child accepts that these are the babies dummies and when they are about 6 months old they can find the dummies themselves if they wake at night.
- Take turns to choose a story.
- Adult beds are fine for toddlers - use cushions rather than bed sides.
- When moving them from cots to beds let them choose their new bedding

GETTING OUT OF THE HOUSE

- Getting you and babies out of the house seems like the hardest thing in the world at first. But do it anyway.
- It can be a lot of effort, but once you meet other mums (especially with twins) —you will realise that you are not alone!



Cars

- If you just have twins, using the easily removable birth-to-9 month car seats are good in the early days as they aren't too heavy yet to carry both at once and you can lift the sleeping babies out of the car without disturbing them. Then graduate to the 9-month to 4-year seats.
- If you have a sibling as well, it is easier to leave the seats in the car and put the babies in a buggy or moses basket to transport them. You can then hold the sibling's hand or get the sibling to hold the buggy.
- Try to get the lightest first stage car seats you can.
- Ask your health visitor about who can check the car seat is fitted properly.
- It's possible you may have to change your car when buying child seats - particularly if there is limited leg room in the back and the driver has long legs!
- When it comes to purchasing 2nd stage car seats buy identical seats to avoid squabbles over who gets which one.
- Use Car Safety Centre in Milton Keynes for hiring 1st seats and

then for selecting 2nd stage seats to suit your car - fitted free. They also offer discounts.

- Check out configuration of car seats. Will three seats fit across the back if you have an airbag in the front?
- Check whether the air bag can be turned off - in your manual or with your garage.
- Mamas & Papas do a double chassis for car seats.
- People carriers are great!
- Rock-a-Tot Car Seats double as a chair for feeding and which you can rock with feet. Watch your back however when loading into smaller cars.

BUGGIES

When selecting a buggy consider:

- size of car
- size of boot,
- size of front door
- type of trips ie shopping centres, walk to school, mud flats
- does it collapse and reassemble easily?
- how much does it weigh?
- does the harness undo quickly?
- is space for shopping needed?
- Look at buggy reviews on websites—www.twinsclub.co.uk or www.mumsnet.com



- A carriage built pram is excellent. They bounce up kerbs with minimum effort, have lots of space for shopping and sleeping. But they are expensive, too big for most cars and may not fit in your hall or through the front door. If you fancy a traditional pram, see if you can borrow one.
- The all terrain buggies are very easy to push and smaller than carriage built prams. Some now can accommodate babies from birth and have room for some shopping.
- Get the lightest with the biggest wheels
- Two single buggies can be handy for shopping/outings with partner.
- Investigate your buggy well in advance; test drive is possible (second hand triple buggies are like gold dust!).
- Decide on what your preferred activities are e.g shopping in town or cross country walking and buy your type of buggy accordingly to suit your lifestyle.
- Look at the different options: fold flat triple, three across or three behind, all terrain buggy, buggy boards, double pram and sling for babies.
- Consider the newer-model all terrain pushchairs, as kids get really hard to push in strollers.
- Shop online - I got my brand new Nipper for £80 less than in the shops
- Don't get rid of the buggy too soon—mine loved going out in it even at age 4.
- As they get older a single buggy and buggy board can be easier to manage.

Travelling general

- If going away for weekend/week without the children, try to have grandparents/carers stay at your house with them as at least they are still in familiar surroundings with all own things around them.
- Take night-lights to unfamiliar places (ie. glowing plugs or 10 watt bulbs) - useful when potty training too.
- "Borrow" a third adult for flights (under 2's) or swimming etc (e.g centre parcs).
- Make the effort to travel when they are small so they get used to sleeping in different places.
- Use reins or backpacks at airports, train stations etc at all times when they are mobile.
- It is easier to travel when smaller as they adapt better to unfamiliar places/routines.
- Buy/borrow travel cot/s. Can then be left at relatives or taken where required.



Flying

- If the children are under 2 and sitting on your lap, you may not be able to sit together on the plane if in a block of 3 seats because of the number of oxygen masks available.

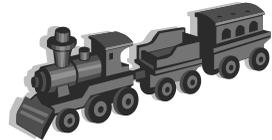
Check with individual airlines as policy varies.

- Pre-book seats if you can.
- Take pram/pushchair up to plane door. It will be taken from

you and put into the fragile goods hold. On arrival wait at plane door for it to be returned to you.

- Single buggies may be the best option , and may be allowed in the overhead lockers.
- It may not be returned to you so be prepared to manage until you get to the terminal (which may be a long walk). Bring baby carriers/slings if needed.
- Tie a distinctive ribbon or name tab to your buggy so that you can easily recognise it.
- Find out if the airline offers Sky Cots and seat restraints. Policies vary on age of child allowed in cots.
- If unable to obtain Sky Cots try to get bulkhead seats for the additional space in front.
- If going long-haul, try to get night flights so they sleep (hopefully)
- Possibly book into the VIP lounge to use as a safe place for the children to run around.
- Bring something for them to suck (bottles, dummies, lollipops etc) for at take-off and landing— helps relieve pressure in ears
- Take them each a knapsack of new, small toys to entertain them. Stickers and finger puppets are small and offer excellent play value.
- Bring a portable dvd player
- Plan several 15 minute activities—drawing, cards, stickers, story etc.
- Ask your travel agent or the airport about restrictions on carrying drinks/baby milk etc through security before you go.

- Take plenty of food, drinks, changes of clothes, small toys, and nappies for the journey *and* your arrival.
- Make sure you have enough food/drink to the inevitable flight delays



TOYS

- Toys can take up a lot of room. Try putting some away in a box for a while, and bringing them out a few weeks later with renewed novelty value!
- If you're going to get rid of toys when they are older, put them aside, out of sight, for a few weeks to see whether they are requested at all before disposing of them!
- Some big toys that cannot easily be put away e.g. dolls houses tend to get less play
- Save your pennies and never buy new. Buy from the Twins Club/ NCT sales or charity shops. Soft toys can go in the washing machine or spray and wipe with some antibacterial cleaner.
- Good basic toys include stacking beakers, plastic tea sets, plastic food and plastic tools and garden equipment.
- Larger toys with good play value include kitchen or work bench, sit in self-propel car (ie Little Tikes coupe).
- Good sources for toys are car boot sales and nearly new sales or use the toy library.
- Try out toys at friends' homes first.
- Negotiate discounts eg. on bikes.

- Stock up on batteries when on offer—it's amazing how many you'll get through. Or invest in lots of rechargables.
- Look at Ebay for good second hand toys. E.g. Lego (much cheaper than new especially when you need more).
- Keep TV and video to a minimum so they are really keen to watch it when you need breathing space.
- Use a cooking/oven timer to announce next one's turn to play with a toy.
- Join your local Toy Library. Great for borrowing toys or just meeting other mums.



PRE-SCHOOL, NURSERY & SCHOOL

- Investigate well in advance, including discounts, attitude to toilet training, safety of car parking for unloading etc. Many private nurseries have huge waiting lists so put names down well in advance, you don't have to commit.
- Ask around other mums with older kids about local playgroups/nurseries etc.
- The terms playgroup, nursery and pre-school are often mixed up and are easily confused. One playgroup and one pre-school may be exactly the same thing.
- When applying for state nursery/primary school, flag that they

are multiples. You may need a letter saying they need to go to the same school.

- When at playgroup/nursery, sending them separately 2 days a week give you time with one and makes them feel very special.



SHOPPING

- Just do it! Don't think about how long it's going to take to get out of the house, just take each step as it comes and get yourself and the children out and about. As long as you time it right - and it does get easier!
- Plan extra time for shopping, as you will always be stopped so that people can ask if they are twins!
- When grocery shopping with twins you can do a couple of things. Park as close to the entrance as possible, lock the car doors and run to the trolleys to get a twin trolley (most major shops now have twin infant and toddler trolleys). Alternatively you could try to get the attention of an attendant to bring a trolley to you - if you're lucky.
- Re-pack your nappy bag as soon as you return home so it is always ready to go when you are.
- Try to go when they are *not* tired and *not* hungry, and take some biscuits/twiglets as bribes
- The twin infant trolleys are very hard so bring a blanket or pushchair liner to pad it.
- Use straps/harnesses for as long as possible.

- Use parent/child parking at the major department stores, supermarkets etc.
- Buying/shopping - always angle for a discount if you are buying two.
- Always take a couple of bottles of juice and some breadsticks to keep them going just that little bit longer.
- Start them young so they get used to it. It can be distracting in the early days and even toddlers can quite like the bright lights, colourful produce and attention they attract.
- When they want to get out of the trolley give them jobs to do e.g. put apples in the bag.
- Limit all stressful activities, especially shopping to small bursts or go alone in the evening to keep sane!
- Shopping malls seem to be more popular and safer than shopping streets.

Local shopping centres (indoors)

In winter or when it's raining, a stroll round an indoor shopping centre can be a great place to be.

Galleria, Hatfield - Lots of indoor space to run about in, usually quite empty in the week..

Watford - Harlequin Centre parking is well served by wide lifts,

Welwyn Garden City - Howard Centre—need to park on the 2nd floor of the attached car park to have direct access to the covered walk way in to M&S etc

Milton Keynes is the most child friendly of the lot.

Brent Cross, north London

Shopping from home

- Use the Internet from home, especially for food and bulky items
- Ebay auction website is a great source of cheap clothing - often different to the usual high street clothes that all other babies are wearing. Buy clothes up to a year in advance

Argos	www.argos.co.uk
Babies R Us	www.babiesrus.co.uk
Baby centre	www.Babycentre.co.uk
Baby world	www.Babyworld.co.uk
BloomingMarvellous	www.bloomingmarvellous.co.uk
Britax Car Seats	www.britax.co.uk
Early Learning Centre	www.elc.co.uk
Ebay - auctions	www.ebay.co.uk
Graco	www.graco.co.uk
Great Little Trading Co.	www.gltc.co.uk
JoJo Maman Bebe	www.jojomamabebe.co.uk
Kids Stuff	www.kids.stuff.co.uk
Lakeland	www.lakelandlimited.uk.com
La Redoute	www.redoute.co.uk
Letterbox Presents	www.letterbox.uk.com
Little Tikes	www.littletikes.com
Tomy	www.tomy.co.uk
M and S Direct	www.marksandspencer.com
Mail Order Express	www.mailorderexpress.co.uk
MacLaren	www.maclaren.co.uk
Mini Boden	www.boden.co.uk
Mothercare	www.mothercare.com
Organic Direct	www.simplyorganic.net
Perfectly Happy People	www.thebabycatalogue.com

RedHouse Books	www.Thebookpeople.co.uk
Sainsbury's Direct	www.sainsbury.co.uk
Shopsmart	www.shopsmart.com
Tesco Direct	www.tesco.com
TP Playframes etc.	www.tptoys.com
Toys r us	www.toysrus.co.uk
Urchin	www.urchin.co.uk
Verbadet	www.verbadet.co.uk
Waitrose	www.ocado.com

ACTIVITIES - INDOORS

St Albans Twins Club Playgroup meets every other Thursday in term time. Toys for 0-5s, and a chance to meet other twin mums.

Big Space, Harpenden. Soft play. The Club arranges 2-4-1 playdates here for members. See Twins Club newsletter.

Adventure World, London Colney. Indoor soft play. Club members get 25% discount in term time.

Gymbabes/Tumble Tots - ample nursery nurses at the venues to help you. Starts from when they can crawl and there are different classes until they go to school.

Hatfield swimming pool operates a crèche facility and will change/dress your kids and bring them to and from poolside for a charge.

Toddler groups and classes - The tip is to suss them all out and be shameless about attending several different ones on consecutive days. Health Visitors can supply lists of these. Some classes will offer the first session free. Check them out for twin/triplet

friendliness. Check out parking, safety, access to loos etc in advance.

Parents Paradise in Greatham road, Watford is really good - but a twin buggy wont fit through the entrance unless you drag it sideways! (but the staff are very friendly and willing to help!) It has climbing frames and ball ponds but has a few more things for older kids too. There is a cafe and all the facilities you need for babies - bottlewamer/microwave/bouncers/highchairs etc etc and its generally just nice and clean!

Birchwood Centre in Hatfield. Large soft play area.

Adventure Castle in Hertford is a good indoor soft play place with good food and coffee.

Mill Green Museum, Welwyn Garden City A working mill and small museum. Special activities in holidays. Beware, the mill race is unfenced!



ACTIVITIES - OUTDOORS

- In the early days just get you babies in the buggy and get out. Having twins means you won't be on your own for long!
- Multiple children will usually spend longer at a venue e.g. zoo or farm due to interaction, so take a picnic and get a full day out with value for money.

LOCAL PARKS

St Albans

- *Verulamium* - ponds, ducks, splash pool, play area.

- *Clarence Park* - play area with sand pit.
- *Chiswell Green*, off Tippendell Lane - Adventure playground with baby swings, animals on springs, large and small slides, long slide set into the hill and lots of green space to run about in (fenced in against dogs). Also has picnic tables. Free, with free parking. Fun from walking age upwards

Harpenden

- *Marquis Lane* - junction of Station Road and lower Luton Road, swing and pirate ship with river to feed ducks.
- *Rothamstead Park* - Between Park Hall Fire Station. Huge park, good swings and can use toilet in the sports centre if need be.

Wheathampstead

- Behind the Memorial Hall on *Marford Road* - Good park with plenty of parking but you have to cross a grass area which would be hard going if muddy and with a non-all-terrain buggy!
- Off *Ash Grove* (at the back of the church) - Small play area with baby swings and a slide
- *Hill Dyke Road* (next to the community centre) - Small play area with swings and a climbing frame with a slide .

Welwyn Garden City

- *Stanborough Lakes* has a café at weekends and everyday from Spring to Autumn. There is a car park charge in Summer. Playground next to the car park and lots of ducks and geese.

Watford

- *Cassiobury Park* - Off Cassiobury Park Avenue/Parkside Drive - 2 large play areas, 3 large paddling pools (open Easter until September), miniature railway at weekends and in the holidays, canal with locks, river, ducks etc.

DAYS OUT



- Willows Farm, London Colney. Huge farm with loads of things to see/do both indoors and out. Club members get 2-4-1 discounts on day and annual tickets.
- Whipsnade Zoo, Dunstable. Large open plan zoo
- Paradise Park, Broxbourne. Zoo and play areas.
- Hatfield House, Hatfield. Large park, cafe and play area. Fee
- Knebworth House. Play fort, dinosaur trail and huge park. Fee
- Shenley Park, nr Radlett.
- Aldenham Country Park, near Elstree. Parking fee.
- Mead Open Farm, Leighton Buzzard
- Bekonscot Model Village and railway. Beaconsfield, Bucks
- London Zoo, Regents Park (but getting there by public transport is tricky).
- Gulliver's Land, Milton Keynes. Great for toddlers.
- Legoland, Windsor (free for under 3s) Use Tesco vouchers for a free trip!
- A return trip on the Abbey Flier to Watford and back (but get someone to help you load the buggy on the train- there is a large drop down to the platform).
- Thomas the Tank Engine days out at steam engine museums eg Nene Valley Railway near Peterborough
- Dunstable Downs. Grassy hills to run down.

The St Albans & District Twins Club



Purpose

Set up in the 1980s, the St Albans and District Twins Club has a large membership of over 150 families coming from towns and villages within a 10 mile radius of St Albans.

We exist to mutually support families in an emotional and practical sense and try to equip them with the information they need to raise happy, healthy multiple children. Our members' needs vary - as some may be parents expecting multiples, or those with babies and toddlers or indeed school aged children.

For a nominal membership fee we ensure that all our activities are self funding. We have close links with TAMBA (Twins and Multiple Birth Association) which is a national organisation and we are working together on a number of fronts.

Activities

For parents expecting multiples, we have contact mums in each area who provide information and support for members, and organise "bumps" evenings, to equip them with the practical and emotional help they will need in the months ahead. We also provide a library service, and this Top Tips booklet.

For those whose multiples have arrived, we organise two table top sales a year, and run a fortnightly playgroup for our families with pre-school aged children. We also organise lots of social evenings and four parties a year to help let off steam!! Members keep in touch with each other by our 'google' group and our popular quarterly newsletter, with club news and articles, its 'for sale' section, equipment for loan, and help register. Finally, to help ease the financial burden of multiple children, we negotiate discounts with local suppliers and venues.

**If you would like more details about the club, or would like more copies of this booklet, please see our website at:
www.twinsclubstalbans.co.uk**



Published by the St Albans & District Twins Club