

Sleeping

The below comments are from Club members responses to a fellow members problems with their multiples not sleeping during Summer 2011.

“Our twins now 3 1/2yrs and on the whole are v good sleepers - except the odd night, which is completely knacker! I did a mixture of Gina Ford (which had worked brilliantly before with my son), sleep bags from birth, in the same cot until couldn't fit. Then in different cots, now beds but always next to each other, the girls always sleep with one part of them touching - v sweet. One went through a 'couldn't settle' phase 6 months ago, and then after doing loads of different things in desperation gave her my nightie - and never looked back - she said ' my smell made her sleepy'!!!”

Helen

I am no expert but someone suggested putting some white noise in the room to stop other noises from disturbing them. I used a radio that wasn't tuned in. Also cassette blinds are great and make the room really dark, the guy in St Albans market makes them, not cheap but totally worth it. A bed time routine that involves a bath and massage. Finally I asked the quieter twin to tell off her sister if she made too much noise, now I just hear the one who wants to sleep shout good night a few times when she is ready to sleep!

Bhavni

I have nearly 6 month old triplets and their last feed is at 6.30 for bed at 7.15/7.30pm and their next feed is 7am. We were very strict with the routine and if they woke we would put a dummy in their mouth and let them cry (this sounds horrid) but it works. Obviously, routine is the key when you have more than one, and persistence...

Lisa

My boys have always been good sleepers, they have always been in the same room and I just had a musical box that I put on when I put them to bed and that settled them and they knew that was the sign for sleep.

Anne

- Try to always put the babies into the cot awake, this way they learn to put themselves to sleep
- Put twins into the same cot/room so they get use to the sound of each other.
- Don't use the car as an aid to sleep, otherwise you will find yourself driving around the streets at 4am!
- Don't use any other aids, shushing, patting, vibrating chairs etc.
- Controlled crying (after 6 months only) does work but you have to feel happy to do it, you and your husband/partner have to both be committed to following it through. (Many disagree with controlled crying, but it does work)!
- Have a routine then the babies/toddlers will settle better and learn what's expected of them.
- Don't keep the rest of the household quiet while the babies sleep, background noise will NOT stop them sleeping.

- Invest in black out curtains and blinds.
- Throw away your baby monitor (controversial I know!) but really what are the chances you won't hear a screaming baby? The likelihood is that you become fixated on watching the monitor and listening out for any sound, and rush in at the first sign of a moan when really part of sleep training means babies need to self soothe and learn to put themselves back to sleep.

In saying all this, I would just like to say that I am guilty of not having a routine at the beginning: Letting the twins sleep at different times which turned into nightmare. Putting the hair dryer on to help them sleep! Waking my husband up and getting him to drive around Hertfordshire all hours of the morning! Keeping the house so quiet so that even the kettle woke them up! My husband used to have the monitor attached to his belt and would fly into the bedroom at the slightest sound! So we failed at every corner but we got there eventually! With all this advice I would say though sometimes you just do whatever it is you can to get them to sleep the problem is that babies are just so clever they get used to things so quickly. Controlled crying saved our lives and our sanity, we now have two really good sleeping toddlers. You will all get there eventually - hope this helps!

Anon

I found that I needed to put one boy on their back one on their front, not common/recommended but I have the Angel Care breathing monitor. The one on his front was much much happier as he had silent reflux (acid going up and down but no vomiting) as it helped his situation and tummy. I sought out medical assistance very quickly when I realised one boy was just not right. Did a lot of research online before going to the doctor and did not take no for an answer if you know what I mean. During the earlier days, when really bad, front sleeper slept in his car seat in his cot with the breathing monitor on so that his reflux didn't bother him so much. Sounds extreme and not what the recommendations state about only 2hrs in a car seat but it was the ONLY thing that helped. In general a good routine is really worthwhile and try not to give in! Don't worry if you only have one room for the twins as they become accustomed to each other and their noises! I have also put one in our bed if they are disturbing the other a lot, until they are asleep.

Tasha

My twins are now almost 6 months. Morgan slept through the night from 3 months. Ella only started sleeping through when we switched to Aptamil 2 hungry milk on the advice of the health visitor. I found Little Me Organics bath milk also had the desired effect on bath days.

Karen

Whilst I did use Gina Ford to structure my feeding times I was never much of an advocate for keeping a baby awake until they were 'meant' to sleep! I've always felt sleep promotes sleep so if my babies fell asleep during the day I let them sleep. However I think having a more structured feeding routine meant they never slept too long in the day as I would wake them up to give them a feed. One thing I did from the start was have an evening routine. Feed, bath, massage, book (even in the very early days). I had some great Rockabye Baby cd's that I downloaded onto an iPod, kept the room lighting subdued and after a last feed

they were in bed by 7pm. They shared a Moses basket, then a cot and eventually different cots but in the same room. I swaddled them until they eventually got too mobile and then I used Grobags which I swore by. I never found that they woke each other through crying, if anything I think it sometimes helped to settle them when they knew the other was there. We tried hard not to rush in to every noise or whimper, I think helping a baby to learn to self-settle is important. I tried to avoid any 'crutches' - rocking to sleeping, sleeping in our bed, driving round in the car (but at times you will do whatever it takes to get an hours peace!!!. I always tried to put them down sleepy but awake. As they got a bit older I started introducing naps at certain times of the day but they would sleep anywhere - downstairs in playpen, in car, buggy, at friends' houses. I think this also helped distinguish night from day at the start. Routine definitely seemed to be the key - seemed to help them and keep my sanity. Later when sleeping anywhere became more difficult as the girls were more alert I tried to always put them down for a main nap in the afternoon in their room. Blackout blinds helped enormously and I was never one for keeping the house quiet—in fact I used to Hoover round them at night sometimes. They still love to sleep—even at 3 1/2 they still head off to bed for an afternoon nap! Our bedtime routine is the same but they like a wider range of stories now and now and then an episode (or 3) of Peppa Pig!! When things have gone awry (when we took sides off the cots or after illness) we have used controlled crying with positive results—it's not for all but if you can follow through it does work. I've never had to do more than 3 nights of it.

Karen

It's never too early to introduce a routine. From the start we tried to work towards getting them in bed for 7pm. OK it didn't work initially but we soon had it sorted and really helped us as the "grown-ups" to try and cope with our world being turned upside down. If they didn't settle then we kept them upstairs in the calm and darkness and settled them there. There were times when after more than an hour I could have happily brought one of them downstairs but we stuck with it and it only happened occasionally. My biggest tip is a baby never died from crying. Buy yourself a timer or use the one on the cooker/mobile phone etc. and if they start crying after you've settled them leave them 5/10 minutes to cry then go and calm then and then repeat the whole process. They will go to sleep if you do stick to it. I remember one evening standing in the door frame, with the door closed behind me, stopping my husband going in to calm them down. It is tough but it does work.

Zoe

Hang on in there! And when twins are young, do separate them! Daytimes; I obtained 2 prams; the old fashioned kind and had one bub sleeping in one pram in the sitting room and the other bub sleeping swaddled (both were swaddled) in the other pram in the hallway. Forgive me this is a bit of a 'Provence Rose wine inspired stream of consciousness'. We found that until the babies were about 8 months old that sleeping separately worked best. We then could focus on getting the inevitably awake child asleep without the fear of waking the other. And eventually, well, within a few weeks, both were in their own routine of going off to sleep nicely in separate spaces; night times in their cots. One of our daughters had an extra night feed until sometime later than her sister and so sleeping in separate rooms accommodated the noise/slurps/burps/vomit without disturbing her sister. I would say that

one has to abandon however many pre-conceived or subconsciously planned ideas about sleeping plans and go with what the newborns need best and therefore what works best for new parents. We had romantic notions of both babies sleeping together for a while until they got bigger and then one of our daughters had fairly severe reflux and so we had to abandon that plan fairly rapidly. Our daughters have spent time in their own rooms and apart over the last 7 years and now they are delighted to be together and happy to be apart. We have a younger child who loves sharing with his sisters too when they'll allow it. I say, my advice is to go with the flow. Grandparents seem to be delight in informing new parents of the hours/days/ months they spent driving their children to sleep and I think this is to help new parents feel better about those times when babies appear not to want to go to sleep. So hang on in there, it will only get easier. Other practical tips are Classic FM (now fondly called 'mummy music' in our house), and the Hoover if you're really desperate; always sent my son to sleep.

Becky

We put the babies upstairs (we did put them in their bedroom but know that advice is now to have them in your room at first) at 7pm every night. Everything was done in their bedroom after that time until the morning e.g. night feeds, dreams feeds etc. This way the downstairs became an adult zone (as much as it can with all the baby equipment) after 7pm. It felt different having a conversation without having the Moses baskets sitting in the room as tempting as it was to have the twins nearby at all times. It made a difference to me as it gave me a bit of space and our relationship a tiny bit of sanity too. We also have a rule that you are allowed in mummy's bed only if you are ill. For the first few years we really struggled with getting one of the twins back in their own cot after being in our bed, even if it was for only one night. We had to use the controlled crying technique with him for about a week each time he recovered from being ill. The other twin was totally fine with going back to his cot - but that's kids for you.

Anita

We put Iwan in a separate room from Gethin very early on as Iwan loved his sleep. He loved going to bed and slept through from a very early age (how fab....and he still loves his bed). We treated both boys identically, they had the same bedtime routine – milk/bath/ warm PJ's /more milk/bed (it would have got me to sleep every time)! Gethin however was having none of it! He was not great at going to sleep – nor staying asleep! Gina Ford doesn't deal with wilful babies who just prefer to be awake and doing things. We tried all sorts of things – pushing him up and down the hallway in his buggy until he fell asleep and creeping past him on our way to bed just hoping that when the last light went off he wouldn't wake and start bawling! Inevitably the silence woke Gethin and back down I went ssshhing him pushing him, singing to him and finally saying through gritted teeth 'get to sleep... now!' I found that his buggy seemed the best place for him to sleep when he was at his worse – although I did try to pick him up in his cosy toes and put him in his cot thinking he might feel as though he was still in his buggy if he was wrapped in his cosy toes....!!! His Granddad spent hours in the dining room, Gethin in his travel cot, windows blacked out, saying sshhh... get to sleep! Every 5/10 mins Geth would lift his head give a big smile and when Granddad said in a gruff voice 'sleep' – he would dive under the covers thinking it was a

game!!! Oh well – I guess I was just going to be knackered all the time! However, as Geth got heavier and managed to drink/eat more – he slept better. Iwan has always been 2lb heavier than Geth and Iwan's reflux wasn't as bad. I think the sleep issue had everything to do with this and obviously when they weren't well – sleep was much disrupted. I started to give Gethin porridge before he went to bedjust a few spoonful's (too much and he would throw it all up!) and he did sleep better. They had a very strict routine for sleeping during the day and I NEVER let them sleep past 5pm even if out in the buggy for a walk. I had the Gina Ford timetable (roughly) and the 'EASY' routine from Baby Whisperer– although never managed to get to the Y part, Eat; Activity; Sleep; You time (this part NEVER happens with twins!). I found the Activity part was vital for them both. Anyway – it is an exhausting time but I found routine, routine, routine was the best thing for my two. My friends with singletons were able to be more relaxed than I was but if I was to stay sane – I had to keep to their routine. It didn't matter where I was – if the routine said they had to EAT – they ate – Sleep, they were put to bed (at someone else's house, or their buggy; or we went home) Activity was easy....and the Y part never happened anyway! Their favourite time for sleeping, when they both went down without a squeak was the morning nap at 9.15am. I used to run across the landing and jump into my bed within seconds of them going down, this was my catch up time. It is really important to forget about clearing away breakfast things – sleep when they do! Anyway – they are now 3 nearly 4 and both sleep really well. Iwan still loves to sleep and although Gethin goes down really nicely, if he was allowed to talk and stay awake he would! I still find I have to be strict with their routine and when Iwan asks, he goes in a separate room. They still have a bath every night, a bit of Ben & Holly or Peppa Pig on TV, story and bed. If I try and get away with the bath – that's fine, but we have to have 1 episode of TV and then a story. If I miss the TV out or the story because they were later having a bath, they kick up a fuss and bedtime gets late (which wasn't the point!). They still like a sleep in the afternoon a couple of times a week. The more consistent the routine – the better we all are for it!!

Nicky

With regards to sleeping I think the thing that saved our sanity was letting them self-settle from day one. Once the feed was over we would always put them down awake. We did this from the minute they came home and it meant that my life was a million times easier during the week when I was caring for them alone. I also feel a good bedtime routine was another life saver. I always bathed, fed and bed around the same time every day. This also ensured I had time to have some one-to-one with my older son. They have been great sleepers and I am sure these things had helped us. Good luck to all those expecting twins, yes the night feeds can be awful, especially when it was the coldest winter for 80 years but it doesn't last forever and once that part is over you do seem to forget (well I did anyway!!!)

Sally

When Jack and Lewis were babies we tried to distinguish day from night as early as possible i.e. Day time sleeps in bouncy chairs or Moses baskets in living room / bed time upstairs to darkened room. We never used cot mobiles as we didn't want them needing gadgets to help them go to sleep (it's all just extra stuff that you need to take on holiday if they get used to that). They initially slept in separate Moses baskets. Then at about 10 weeks, we put them in

their separate cot beds and moved them into their own room. Yes I know all the advice is keep babies in room with you for 6 months... But Jack and Lewis were such noisy snorers and Jack always farted sooooo loudly in his sleep! So for our sanity and sleep - we moved them out! We initially swaddled them to go to sleep (which worked great) then at 16 weeks, we switched to grobags which they loved (we initially tried grobags at 12 weeks and they didn't take to them so we left it a few weeks, tried again and they loved them). We've always tried to have a good bedtime routine but you do need to flex and change the routine as they get older i.e. Their actual bed time will change as they get mobile and tire themselves out more, drop day time naps etc. plus your routine will change when they stop getting bedtime bottles or drinks and you start getting them out of nappies at night (we have strict no drinks after tea time rule). So you do need to be flexible with the routine but I do feel a bedtime routine is important (for the children and for mums!). Also, whenever we go on holiday / stay at relatives - we try and stick to the bedtime routine that the boys are used to. So although they are sleeping in a different place, it should still all be familiar. Jack and Lewis have thankfully always been great at going to bed and great sleepers. The only period where we had a bit of trouble was when we dropped the sides in their cot beds (they were 3 I think) and we had a few weeks of much hilarity and mischief at bedtime. Mostly involving making wigwams out of the bed mattresses or squishing each other under the bed mattresses. Thankfully - they got tired of all that after a few weeks and we went back to normal again!

Linda