

Raising twins: Double the trouble, double the fun

By SUZANNE KENNEDY

Did you know that there are seven different types of twins? The most common, or course, are fraternal and identical. Fraternal twins are the result of two eggs being fertilized by two different sperm, while identical twins begin from the same fertilized egg, which splits. Those less common include mirror image twins who match when they are facing each other. The egg splits a little later (about 9-12 days in).

One might be left-handed while the other is right-handed, or their hair might naturally part on the opposite side, etc.

The likelihood of having twins is about 3 in every 100 births, according to the Society for Reproductive Medicine. Triplets and quadruplets are a bit more rare at 1 per 800, and the chance of having identical twins is 1 in about 1000. With the exception of the occurrence of identical twins, which has remained very constant, there's been a pretty big increase in twins and other multiples as a result of fertility drugs and the trend of waiting longer to have children.

What's so great about having



twins? Every parent I interviewed answered first with "a built-in playmate." Your children have a friend for life. While they might fight like cats and dogs, and argue until they are blue in the face, most twins are great friends and are each other's staunchest supporters. Some moms, thankful that their twins are into the same sports, appreciate the lack of a second commute. They tend to go through stages at the same time, like potty training and puberty. It's exponentially more difficult (imagine two or even three teenage girls in a bathroom), but at least the rough parts are over a bit more quickly.

Financially, having multiples can

be a struggle. With the exception of the hospital stay (that's a definite two for one deal) the rest is double the money. Two cribs, two bikes, and clothes and toys for two adds up. Most daunting might be the idea of having them in college at the same time. The majority of the multiples moms that I spoke to had to buy a new car

when their babies were born. It's tough to fit two car seats in a backseat, and that is compounded when you have other kids as well.

Parents of multiples differ in how they treat their children as well. Some choose to treat them alike and some are adamant about treating them as unique individuals. Regardless, parents will likely go with whatever is easiest on them and what works best for the family. What mother wants to throw two back-to-back toddler birthday parties? Surprisingly, most parents I know weren't very worried about the friend situation. They all seemed to be fine with their children having the same or separate groups of friends, although it's apparently more common to have the same.

Common advice for parents of multiples:

- Buy maternity clothes as soon as you are pregnant, because chances are you will be wearing them as soon as you are pregnant.
- Buy two of everything in the same color. You cannot win an



Parenting Tip

argument over the fact that color doesn't matter when they both want the same green toy.

- Get over the guilt of not being able to meet the children's needs at the same time. Yes, one may have to wait, but that is offset with the knowledge that being a twin is something so super special that one mom even described it like this: "The twin dynamic is so palpable that it's like having another child."

Advice for people who are not parents of multiples:

- Do not ask the parent of twins how they were conceived. This is bad form.
- Be patient. Twin parents are on constant high alert, and, as such, are more tired than we could ever imagine.
- Do not tell them that you know exactly how they feel because you have kids who are very close in age.
- Do tell them they are amazing and are doing a great job. In fact, please say this to any parent you know, regardless of whether or not they have twins.

Twins or triplets, identical or fraternal (or even mirror), it gets easier as they get older. Hang in there!

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