

Make Room for Multiple Moms

If you are among the more than 3% of women having twins (or more!) children at once, you are overwhelmed. While twins are becoming more commonplace, it is far from common to know what to do when you double your family. Especially as a first-time mother.

Once the excitement – and let's face it, bewilderment – settles in, along with your growing belly comes a growing number of questions. While it would seem easiest for pregnant mothers-to-be to be comforted by other new moms – friends and family already in their circle of trust - the reality is that a singleton mom just cannot help. There is nothing like having multiples. It is more than additional babies; it's a different mindset. A multiples pregnancy is often riddled with unique issues from the more mundane: more babies = more nausea, to the more aggravating: greater chance of gestational diabetes, increased reliance on genetic testing and frequent mandates of bed rest, to the real threats: viability of life, twin-to-twin transfusion, prematurity. Sure, you are discussing issues with a doctor, but as doctors' greatest concern is the unborn children, many moms-to-be are left wondering how to navigate many emotional, practical and logistical components of their pregnancy and the babies' arrival.

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If only there were a solution, you think. Well, there is! Your local Mother's of Multiple's group is an untapped resource designed to relieve your growing (literally and figuratively) concerns. Consisting of seasoned moms, as well as pregnant ladies-in-waiting, Mother's of Multiples groups welcome all with open arms and hearts. You may have heard of their incredible annual sales, but they are much more than purveyors of gently used merchandise.

With the guidance from a Multiples Mothers group, you can often identify what (and how!) to ask your doctor questions. Gone are the appointments where you sit with a blank stare, itching your stretching belly, wondering how you'll survive daily trips to the NICU after birth (multiples make up a great deal of the 10-15% of babies who spend time in this unit) and strategies to overcome -- or attempt to face -- postpartum (yes, sadly, along with more babies comes the increase in postpartum depression).

For many expectant mothers of multiples, the greatest challenge is knowing what to ask -- it is a unique time in life when you "don't know what you don't know," hindering you from getting to answers you feel secure about, despite countless hours spent online or with your nose in one of the countless books available. For those that seek counsel from these sources, it must be said that no book or website

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can look at your face and realize what you need instead of yet another sleep strategy is a hug and perhaps comfort that another “stress test” doesn’t actually mean something could be wrong with the babies.

Joining a Mothers of Multiples group provides the benefit of hearing from others first-hand about things you’d never believe you could do (tandem breastfeeding can be done...and you might just love it!) or how to find economical relief (crib sharing/co-bedding is a miracle) in the first year. But offering direction is just part of their merit; The beauty of this group is that some of your greatest fears can be alleviated by just showing up and being surrounded by those just like you, and eating cookies in the warmth of another family’s home.

For the shy among us, the anonymity of a Multiple group’s website forums – you can ask anything! – is a dynamic tool. For the majority, the soulful personal connection with mothers who have not just muddled through, but in fact survived the first year(s) and can now laugh upon reflection, is essential to well being. This is what often keeps you going when bed rest and early contractions may start to weigh you down. Personally, I begged for advice and soaked up stories at meetings, while all the women told me how great I looked in my final trimester. Their praise – and sympathy – helped get me through bed rest, swollen “cankles” and great debate about cord blood banking. Yes, there is a new vernacular and the mother’s group can steer you through that as well.

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One mom of twins admitted that joining her multiples group while pregnant -- instead of after delivery -- was equivalent to putting together the babies' necessities before the middle of the night when you are frantic. Why wait??

What no one tells you is that the friendships don't end on the delivery table - this cord is not cut, and the group's benefits continue. As you strive to juggle new mouths to feed, mothers from your group appear offering a helping hand with dinner, cleaning -- anything you need, or are willing to accept. Mothers of Multiples group friendships take on a whole new dimension as you attempt to navigate why you have yet to figure out what day of the week to shower, when your singleton friends are not only well-groomed but have mastered breastfeeding while having lunch out. Armed with friends who have been there, you will make your way.

The greatest reward, however, is being able to pay it forward. The day you take a swollen-faced mother-to-be in your embrace, comfort her about the journey on which she has embarked, and count kicks with her in times of fear will be some of your proudest moments. You have survived...and thrived...as they promised you would.

Mother's of Multiples groups -- Brings about a new meaning of friends with benefits.