

Twins, triplets and more



Twins trust. We support twins, triplets and more...

There are around 10,000 twin births and around 100-150 sets of triplets born each year across the UK. We know from research that babies who are most vulnerable to sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) are often premature or of low birth weight, which is common in multiple births. All our advice on safer sleep is therefore particularly important if you have multiples, and this factsheet is where you can find tailored information on how to sleep your twins and multiples safely.

Should my twins or triplets sleep separately or together?

You may like to have your twins in their own Moses baskets or cots from birth, or you may decide to co-bed them in the early weeks and months. Co-bedding means siblings share the same sleep surface during any sleep period, for example by being in the same cot together. Whichever you decide, all The Lullaby Trust advice for safer sleep should be followed for each baby, for each day and night time sleep. This includes, for example: sleeping your babies on their backs, keeping your babies smoke-free during pregnancy and after birth, and using flat, firm and waterproof mattresses, amongst others. Please have a read of our other factsheets for guidance around sleeping babies as safely as possible.

Co-bedding means babies share the same sleep surface for any sleep period. This is different to bed-sharing (co-sleeping), which means babies share a sleep surface with an adult for most of any sleep period, not just to be comforted or fed.

Many parents choose to co-bed their twins due to issues of space, in adhering to the key safety message of sharing a room with your babies for the first six months. If you decide to co-bed your twins in the early weeks and months, there are a few key points to consider.

Advice on co-bedding also applies to triplets or quads. They could in the early days be slept next to each other with their feet to the long side of the cot to give more space. As the babies grow you should then offer them more space by using more cots, for example two could share and one on their own or by using a Moses basket per baby. Once one of your babies has started travelling in the cot or rolling then it is safer for them to have their own sleep space.

Key points on co-bedding:

- Only place them side-by-side in a cot in the early weeks, when they can't roll over or onto each other. Make sure they are not close enough to touch and potentially obstruct each other's breathing
- There's no need to use rolled up towels, pillows or anything else between their heads and the use of cot dividers is not recommended. These items can become potential hazards
- It might be good to start sleeping them at opposite ends of their cot from the beginning - this means they'll both be in the 'feet to foot' position with their own bedding firmly tucked in. You may choose instead to use baby sleeping bags
- Once any of your babies have learnt to roll, it might be practical to move them to their own sleep surfaces
- It is not advisable to place your twins or triplets in the same Moses basket, even when they are very small. This is to minimise the chance of them overheating, which is known to increase the chance of SIDS. Even with small babies a Moses basket is too small for more than one baby to sleep safely.

Frequently asked questions



Can I bed share/co-sleep with my twins?

The safest place for a baby to sleep is in a cot or Moses basket. Sharing a bed with an adult is a significant risk for babies born prematurely or at a low birth-weight, which is common in multiples. Bed sharing is particularly dangerous if either you or your partner smokes (even if you do not smoke in the bedroom), has drunk alcohol or taken drugs (including medications that may make you drowsy), or are very tired. You can find further information about this in our bed sharing factsheet, available on our website.

If my twins were slept close together on the NICU, shouldn't I be continuing this at home?

Premature or low birth-weight twins are often slept in close proximity on the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit to model the intrauterine environment and improve the development of vital functions like heart rate and breathing. Once your babies are discharged, they should be ready to be slept according to the safer sleep advice for all babies, as found in our literature. Have a read of our website and phone our advice line with any queries on 0808 802 6869.

My babies are 4 months old and are too big to share a cot. I don't have space for two cots downstairs for daytime naps. What is the safest way to sleep them in the day?

Following safer sleep advice like placing your baby to sleep on their back for every sleep is essential to reducing the risk of SIDS. Travel cots, smaller cribs/cots or a combination may offer a good alternative for daytime naps downstairs until they are 6 months old. However, if this isn't an option, leaving doors open and checking them regularly is important. Using a baby monitor may give peace of mind but shouldn't replace your presence in the room whilst they are napping.

I've read that babies need separate sleep spaces once they can roll and move about the cot. What is the best thing to do if I don't have space for two cots in my room?

Sometimes it may be difficult to follow all of our safer sleep advice if you are short of space. If you can't fit two cots in your bedroom for your twins, make the advice work for you – leave doors open between your rooms, or take in turns with a partner to sleep with the twins in a nursery room. If possible, you may even be able to borrow something smaller than a second cot for a couple of months, such as a crib or smaller travel cot. Give our information line a call to have a chat about any further options.

More information

Visit the Twins Trust website for more advice:
[twinstrust.org](https://www.twinstrust.org)

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