

According to TAMBA, the Twins and Multiple Births Association, around 12,000 twin births occur each year. 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 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.

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 either of your babies have learnt to roll, it might be practical to move them to their own sleep surfaces. This is to prevent one from obstructing the breathing of the other, or causing an accident
- It is not advisable to place your twins 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 two babies 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 health visitor told me it's better for twins to sleep in the same cot together than to sleep separately. Why is this?

At The Lullaby Trust, we often will promote co-bedding your twins so that you can share a room with them if you have restricted space. Sharing a room with your babies is a really important measure you can take to reduce the chance of SIDS. However, there are other reasons you might want to co-bed your twins that you might want to look into. Various areas of research have suggested that putting twins in the same cot can help them regulate their body temperatures and sleep cycles, and can soothe them and their twin.

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 can be tough in a practical sense to adhere to all of the safer sleep messages, particularly if you are short on space. If you can't fit two cots in your bedroom for your twins, make the advice work for you – you may like to leave doors open between your rooms, or perhaps 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. Give our advice line a call to have a chat about any further options.

Triplets or more

Advice on co-bedding also applies to triplets or quads. Although it is likely that your babies will be smaller, it is not advisable to co-bed multiples for longer than the first few weeks. They could in these 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, or by using multiple Moses baskets.

More information

Read TAMBA's free guide *Twins, Triplets or More: The First Year* for more information on how to sleep your babies comfortably, or link in with TAMBA's members-only messageboards for parent-to-parent support.