

# Twin Babies Sleep Success

*Radhika Katru, MD*



RADHIKA KATRU

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# **Twin Babies – Sleep Success**

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radhika@twinbabycare.com

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## Introduction

I am a stay at home first time mom taking care of my miracle twin baby girls. They are 19 months old as I write this and the past one year has been an incredibly joyful, overwhelming, nerve wrecking and extremely challenging ride. I was a full time practicing physician in the field of internal medicine before I decided to be a stay at home mom to take care of my precious little ones. They are truly a miracle for us in every sense and they did not come easy for me, which probably pushed me in the direction of being a stay at home mom. I had to undergo multiple rounds of aggressive fertility treatments and just as I was losing hope, came the stars shining into my life.

This booklet is not about me, but it's about helping other twin moms in handling the task of taking care of twin babies, which is not an easy one to say the least. Self education, having access to all the information and utilizing it in your own way for your particular situation is extremely essential when it comes to taking care of multiples. I made the mistake of not doing that until I stumbled upon obstacles and we mothers presume that everything will come naturally. But, we surely can use some help and guidance from people who have been in a similar situation. When I was pregnant with my precious ones I had a few health issues and complications to deal with as you would expect in most of multiple pregnancies. I was more worried and apprehensive about the pregnancy rather than concentrating on learning how to tackle various aspects and hurdles in taking care of twin babies. I wish somebody had told me what problems I might encounter or what I could do to prevent running into trouble, but I didn't have that luxury. I was ill-prepared for what was about to come and on many an occasion ran head-on into extremely stressful situations. This is why I had decided to be a source of information for as many new or would be moms of Twin babies as possible.

I hope to add more content to my website [www.twinbabycare.com](http://www.twinbabycare.com) as I learn new things. I have learnt a lot in the past 1 year partly from my own experience and mistakes and partly because of this inner mommy voice that screams at me to find out what the right thing is, which I am sure all moms out there can associate with.

I hope I could be of at least some help and have provided you with some strength to encounter this monumental task of raising Twin babies. If you have any comments or suggestions please leave a note for me in the comments section of my web site [www.twinbabycare.com](http://www.twinbabycare.com).

# Sleep

Sleep is a major issue that needs to be talked about in detail; I cannot emphasize this enough as I am a living example of how it shook our lives for a period of time that I cannot ever forget in my life. Sleep for babies as everyone knows is the next major necessity after nutrition for not just their well being but also for their physical and mental development throughout their initial stages of life. The biggest advice I can give is to let the babies learn how to sleep from an early stage and this will save you and the little ones a lot of trouble and sleepless nights.

We followed our instincts to soothe and comfort until our babies fell asleep and used swing and other motion devices to keep them asleep. Initially all was well but as they grew older we ran into lots of trouble and we as a family had to pay heavily.

My little angles were getting more and more sleep deprived and nothing was comforting them and they ended up having major sleep problems all because of us unknowingly teaching them the wrong methods/ways to fall asleep and overly soothing (even though they were old enough to learn to self soothe) thinking that we were doing the right thing. We did not give them a chance to develop any self soothing skills and I realized that we had to do something about it to save our sanity and my babies sleep.

I was extremely desperate and spent a lot of time looking for ways to help my family and more importantly my tired babies to get the sleep that they deserve. Nothing else was on my mind for a while other than their sleep, and getting my babies to sleep happily became the goal of my life. Luckily I came across a lot of information that I read over and over. With each other's support my husband and I ventured to undo all the damage we had done. Thankfully we have successfully taught our babies to fall asleep and stay asleep on their own and it is truly a blessing for all of us. Our home is very peaceful at night more than ninety percent of the time. Our babies sleep almost 11-12 hours straight without any night waking (except for occasional disruptions due to teething, illness, or delayed bed time due to social events) and take good naps during the day. I want other parents of Twins to learn from our experience without having to go through the painful process of learning on their own. The best approach is to educate yourself regarding the babies sleep requirements and sleepy signs and starting early! You will also learn about various sleep arrangements for the babies and do whatever is best for the entire family.

My favorite authors on sleep issues are Dr. Marc Weissbluth and Dr. Richard Ferber. Their books *Healthy Sleep Habits - Happy Child* and *Solve*

*your Childs Sleep Problems* have been the guidebooks for me during the difficult sleep deficient months that we had as a family. These books have been a great help for me in solving the sleep problems with our Twins. I urge every parent of multiples to read these books whatever your parenting style may be. These books contain some great research based theories and principles that you can learn a thing or two from. Knowledge is power they say and when it comes to caring for Twins you can always use more of it!

In this booklet as you read you will find:

- The problems we faced.
- How we solved those problems.
- What mistakes we made while trying to solve the problems.
- And what we learnt from our mistakes through our own research.

As you read our story month by month you will come across these topics and towards the end you will read about how we finally solved our Twin babies sleep problems with 10 very important tasks!

## **Our Sleep Story**

### **Birth**

It all seems like a blur but at the same time it still feels fresh in my memory. Before my babies were born my husband and I planned on having them both in one crib next to our bed with the side rail down. Initially when we brought the babies home we followed the plan and it went alright for about a week. We fed the babies whenever they woke up which ended up being about every 2 hr feedings and by the time we were finished feeding them and changing them, they were ready to sleep. We would swaddle them and put them in the crib and they would sleep for an hour or so and wake up for their next feeding. Everything was like clockwork.

### **First month**

After the 1st week both the babies had difficulty falling asleep, we swaddled them, held them, carried them and walked them. After prolonged soothing they would fall asleep and then we would put them in the crib to find them waking up in an hour. We managed to continue this for a week or so and soon became very exhausted. I had a C-section and I was nursing and pumping and my husband did the bottle feeding, changing, burping and soothing. After the first couple of weeks we both were very tired and just needed some rest.

### **How we solved it ... incorrectly**

One night we brought the babies to our bed and we all slept together, and they slept better. Since then we did the same thing for the following few months. It was such a nice, cozy feeling! We were aware of the SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) risk but my husband and I became light sleepers after the birth of our babies and we used very light sheets so we knew SIDS wasn't a concern for us. Once the babies started sleeping with us in bed they slept longer and nursing them was also much easier.

During the day also they had difficulty staying asleep in the crib so we ended up having them sleep in a bouncer and a swing. We fed them whenever they woke up we changed them and burped them. First twin was sleeping in the bouncer during the day initially. After a week or so we borrowed a battery operated rocking cradle that moves from side to side and we used that for her sleep during the day. Second twin was sleeping in the swing; we had an electric cradle swing from Fisher Price which worked like magic. It really helped settle her down. At night when my husband and I were ready to go to bed we would take the babies with us and we all slept together in the bed. We fed them during the night whenever they woke up, which ended up being every 2 hr feedings.

My babies required a lot of burping and they needed to be held upright and walked after every feeding until they were comfortable and sleepy. The swing and the battery operated rocker and the bouncer were life savers! We wouldn't have survived the first couple of months if it weren't for these. I was lucky to have the support of my husband who stayed home for the first month after the birth. My mother was extremely supportive, she came to stay with us and help us for the first 3 months after birth. My husband and I were taking care of the babies and my mother was making sure we were eating and getting as much rest as we could during the day.

### **Mistakes we made and lessons learnt**

We had no understanding of the concept of awake span (how long a baby can and should stay awake before the next sleep period), all we were told when we came from the hospital were to feed them every 2 hours. We did not realize that we needed to put them to sleep within 40 minutes of being awake (ideally even 30 min. in some babies who are born early like most of the twins). We probably took too long to get both of them fed and changed. I was nursing both babies one after the other and then pumped and my husband was helping with the bottle-feeding, all of this took a while factoring in fatigue, and on top of

*It is very important for the babies to fall asleep within 45 minutes from the time they wake up.*

# Sleep Strategy

After much of studying and researching we set about formulating a strategy to achieve our babies' sleep goals.

## Task 1 - Weaning from Pacifier

I started limiting the pacifier use to only nights and naps. This was a very difficult time for the second twin; she was in constant search of pacifier, restless and edgy. She continued to wake up every hour in the night for the pacifier and would not go back to sleep until it was replaced; she would just cry and scream. I would be afraid that she might wake up the other baby and ended up giving her the pacifier and that's when she would go back to sleep. We continued this for a couple of weeks and nothing has improved, so after doing some research I decided to stop the pacifier. I knew this would be very hard on my baby but we did not have much of a choice. We had to speed up the process, but my baby has a very strong personality and she does not give up anything without a big fight.

We prepared ourselves mentally and one day we decided to stop giving the pacifier but she kept asking for it constantly every minute. I happened to have read that if I give her the pacifier with the tip cut off that would help her get over it sooner. I held my breath and gave her favorite pacifier with the tip cut off. She anxiously grabbed the pacifier and put it in her mouth and quickly realized that it wasn't working like it did. She cried, she moaned, she sobbed. It was painful, heart breaking and gut wrenching to see a seven month old cry and moan for something like it was gone forever and she wasn't going to see it again. She would turn her head and look at the pacifier with the tip cut off and sob and cry. Nothing could comfort her. We held her, we rocked her, and we talked to her. Nothing at all could comfort her, she was really mad. She fell asleep after crying for a long time but the next day was an entirely different day! It was just amazing to see the transformation!! She was liberated, she was not restless, not edgy, more than anything she wasn't spending all the time looking for the pacifier, she was interested in playing and in surroundings and she was even eating better!!!. We were so relieved and elated to see our baby actually calm, relaxed and smiling; at that point we knew we didn't do a bad thing by taking away her most precious binky. The pacifier had served its purpose well in the first three months but afterwards it was not physiologically needed and it was affecting her personality and development. We said good bye to Mr. Binky, the ordeal was quite painful but it was short. We threw away all the pacifiers and we never let the baby see a pacifier again.

# Babies Sleep Basics

## What is Awake span?

Awake span is how long a baby can and should stay awake before the next sleep period. Refer to below table for how long the awake span lasts approximately at what age.

<b>Birth to Six Months</b>	Generally awake span for most babies initially is less than 1 hour (usually 30 minutes) this slowly increases to 45 min then 1 hour, 1.5 hrs and finally around 2 hrs by 6 months of age. Initially they would have to sleep with in even 30-45 min of waking up. Pretty much in the first few weeks they are awake for the feedings and changing only. As they grow it increases to 2 hrs. By using this guideline as a rough reference and paying attention to your babies sleep cues you can encourage your baby to sleep according to their need. It is not possible to have any kind of schedule yet because the sleep patterns are still very immature.
<b>Six to Seven Months</b>	They start taking a longer nap in the morning about 1 hour nap at 8/9am. Depending on when they wake up about 2 hrs from wake time they take a morning nap. Two hours after waking up from morning nap is afternoon nap around 40 minutes and naps repeat like this 2hrs after waking up from the previous nap until bed time but the naps are shorter 40 minutes or so.
<b>Seven to Nine Months</b>	They take solid afternoon and early evening naps. Two hours from waking up in the morning is morning nap, 2 hrs after waking up from morning nap is afternoon nap, 2 hrs after waking up from afternoon nap is evening nap and 2 hrs after waking up from evening nap is bed time.
<b>Nine to Twelve Months</b>	Awake span slowly increases to 3-4 hours. 3 hrs from waking up in the morning is morning nap, 3 hrs from waking up from the morning nap is afternoon nap and 3hrs after waking up from afternoon nap is bed time.

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