



Colbea, Cooper and Chase



**Tips For Multiples: The First Year and Beyond**

Below are useful tips sent in from our very own NICU graduate moms and dads. They may not all be right for you but read them and see which ones you think might be helpful. Hope there are some you haven't already thought of.

**\*The #1 tip all our parents of multiples agreed on was to try to keep the babies on the same sleep and feeding schedules NO MATTER WHAT.**

**Feeding and Sleeping Tips:**

- Be prepared for shorter feeding intervals than you might think. By the time you finish feeding your multiples it may only be about 90 minutes until the start of the next feeding cycle. It could be even less.
- You can position the babies to be able to safely feed two at one time. I would feed the twins in their bouncy seats or car seats and feed them at the same time with one hand to hold each bottle. Then I just took turns burping them.
- If you are bottle feeding, always try to have bottles ready for the next feeding, or even better, the next day. To save even more time, we would make a pitcher of formula at a time and then fill the bottles up.
- While they are small enough have them sleep nearby. We kept them in the same bassinet next to our bed for about a month after they got home. Then for the middle of the night feeding, we both got up, bottle fed them in 15 minutes, and were back in bed sleeping.
- Keep a simple log of who ate when and how much or you can totally lose track. You can also log diaper changes on it.

**Time/Energy Saving Tips:**

- Keep a laundry basket and stain remover (i.e. Spray and Wash, Shout...) in several rooms. The one we used most was in the kitchen. We would feed the kids, take off dirty clothes and bibs, spray them, throw them in the basket and come back to wash them when we were ready to do laundry.
- If you have a house with more than one level think about putting a changing table and supplies (diapers, wipes, ointment...) on each level. We had a changing table downstairs and in their bedroom which I know saved us many trips up and down the steps in those exhausting first few months.

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*The NICU Family News is produced by the Saint Barnabas Medical Center (SBMC) Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) Family Advisory Council (FAC). It is designed to provide you with information we hope you will find useful during and after your family's stay in the NICU.*

**DID YOU KNOW...**

... the SBMC NICU just recently received the NJ Hospital Association Excellence in Quality Improvement Award for the work our FAC has been doing to create a more family-centered unit?

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## *Interview with Alessandra G. Capra R.N.*

**SBMC NICU Nurse for almost eight years and mother of SBMC NICU triplets**



### **Q: Why did you become a NICU nurse?**

**A:** I have always loved babies, but I knew I wanted to be a NICU nurse when my cousin, who is now 22, was born prematurely. I was fascinated by the nurses and how they cared for the tiny babies. From that moment on my mind was set! As challenging and sometimes heartbreaking as it is can be to work in the NICU, it is also very rewarding to see the babies grow and thrive. As a NICU nurse, I don't only care for the babies, but also for their families.

### **Q: What do you like most about working in the NICU?**

**A:** I have met so many wonderful people here.

### **Q: What was it like to be a parent of triplets in the NICU?**

**A:** Having my own babies in the NICU was also very challenging, to say the least! What made it easier for me was that my friends were taking care of my babies and I knew what to expect. At the same time though, it's not always good to know too much! I think it can make you worry even more. We experienced many of the ups and downs that most families do in the NICU but this time I was on both sides.

### **Q: What was the hardest thing about it?**

**A:** Trying not to worry my family. That was hard to do knowing in my mind all the things that could go wrong. Thankfully, we had so much support from family and friends and eventually brought home three beautiful babies!

### **Q: Did being a NICU parent change the way you interact with current NICU families? If so how?**

**A:** Having been through the "NICU experience" myself, I definitely feel that now I can relate to my patients and families more. In a way, I think now I have more sympathy and compassion for them. I can also give them advice and guidance, and share stories from my own personal experiences as well as nursing experiences now.

### **Q: Do you have any suggestions you would give to other parents of multiples about surviving the first year?**

**A:** The number one tip I would give to parents of multiples would be to keep them on a schedule. This definitely helped us get through the first year, this and all the extra hands we had! Also good advice, if people want to help, let them as long as they wash their hands first!

## Emily and Andrew's Story

As happy parents to Stephen, who was born at SBMC in September 2003 at a healthy 9 ½ pounds via c-section, my husband Jason and I hoped to have another child one day. When that day came, we received news we didn't expect. My OB said to my husband, "Come over here you want to see something cool, look there are two." After the shock and joy settled, everything seemed to happen fast. The summer ended, we blinked, and the morning of November 14, 2007, was upon us. At 28 weeks, we were at SBMC and I was still in complete denial -- even after a visit by a neonatologist who reviewed the c-section that was about to happen.

At 10:14 a.m. Emily arrived at 2 pounds, 7.8 ounces with a cry like nothing I've ever heard (so tiny yet so strong). Three long minutes later, we met Andrew in silence. He was 2 pounds, 8 ounces, breach and intubated in the delivery room. I remember being wheeled in to see them at some point. I knew they were my children but none of what was going on around me seemed real.

Five days later, reality hit when I had to go home without them. As time progressed, Emily did amazingly well. She was only on

oxygen for 9 days with a pretty much event-free stay other than digestion issues; she came home weeks earlier than anticipated. Andrew had a different experience. His first few days on the oscillating ventilator had us rattled. Not just because we watched it shake him, but because this too was not in the plan. Andrew continued on the ventilator/oxygen assistance for over 40 days. While his journey kept us in a state of worry, he did provide us with memories we can laugh about now. From desaturating often when I touched him, to failing his "car seat challenge" in preparation for discharge, Andrew was a jokester before he even knew it. Even with all the challenges he too came home earlier than initially expected.

Emily's first year went like clockwork while Andrew continued on a difficult path which began not long after he came home. He contracted everything you'd hope a newborn wouldn't -- including RSV, Strep Pneumonia, and Viral Croup to name a few. These were made worse by his complex airway issue, but thru physical therapy and excellent medical care at SBMC he is now a normal 3 year old just like Emily. Mom, Dad and Big Brother Stephen will always be grateful to SBMC for their dedication to the research and care of premature infants.



## Miracle Walk Update



This past October we had our highest-attended Miracle Walk yet, with almost 2,500 participants present for the occasion of the 10th Annual Miracle Walk. NICU graduates and their grateful families and friends, and staff all took part in the day. This year's event raised more than \$440,000 for the NICU. As always, the money raised will help purchase special state-of-the-art NICU equipment which will help the incredible NICU staff continue to provide the highest level of care possible to the NICU babies.

In past years there has been a DJ, balloon artists, face painters and costumed characters for all to enjoy at the walk. Food and refreshments are provided, as are gift bags, for all who walk so save the date and join us this year.



**Mark your calendars now for the next walk!**  
**11th Annual Miracle Walk To Benefit the SBMC NICU**  
**October 2, 2011**

To learn more: [MIRACLEWALK.COM](http://MIRACLEWALK.COM) ■ 973-322-4259  
 Find **MIRACLE WALK** on **FACEBOOK**: [www.facebook.com/miraclegwalk](http://www.facebook.com/miraclegwalk)

## Important Phone Numbers:

NICU  
973-322-5300

NICU Step-down (3100)  
973-322-5310

NICU Nurse Manager  
973-322-5345

NICU Social Workers  
973-322-5503 or 8408

Birth Certificate Office  
973-322-5327

Lactation Consultants  
973-322-5684

NICU High Risk Infant  
Follow-Up Program  
973-322-2631

## Want to Help the Family Advisory Council?

The FAC is made up of graduate parents dedicated to helping new NICU parents. We meet monthly to discuss ways to do this. We're always looking for recent graduate parents to share their experiences and ideas to make our NICU the best it can be. We welcome your ideas and participation. Contacts:

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(Tips For Multiples, continued)

### Money Saving Tips:

- Feed your babies breast milk if you can. It's free and good for them.
- I asked my pediatrician for extra formula samples, which they gave us every time we went in with the kids (which was quite often in the beginning). The pediatrician's offices have forms from Formula Sales Reps that can be filled out by parents of multiples to receive some free formula for each child. They usually supply at least one case per child.
- If you look online you can find companies that send coupons for formula, baby food, diapers and wipes if you email or write to them.
- Try to buy the big diaper box deals at Babies R Us, Costco or diapers.com. We also asked friends & family send us all the coupons they could find.
- If you are formula feeding you might consider a generic or store brand. When we switched to formula we used the Target generic and it was about 1/2 the price of some of the others.
- As the kids get older, ask for twins or multiple discounts at stores, day cares, dance lessons etc.

### Find Time for Yourself (You'll need it!):

- Ask others for help and allow them to help, keeping in mind it doesn't matter how most things get done as long as the end result is the same.
- We had a regular double stroller and jogging stroller (handed down from a friend), so we could take both out to exercise and one parent got time away.

### Support:

- NJMOM (New Jersey Mothers of Multiples) has chapters/clubs all over NJ and are a part of NOMOTC (National Org. of Mothers of Twins Club). I joined when I was pregnant with the triplets and found support from

moms who also had children that spent time in the NICU.

- Make use of Twins or Premie magazines and books, or if needed ....throw the books out and call your NICU buddy or another friend with multiples to get some ideas...then, do what works for you.
- Either totally ignore silly comments like, "How do you bond with two babies?" or "Ugh twins, that is way too much work" or have your response ready....."It's twice as much love in return" or "Twin mothers/fathers have their own unique bonds".

### Miscellaneous:

- Take pictures of them separately and together.
- It's okay to be a little unconventional at times to make things work. Sometimes I would bring the side by side stroller in the house for them to be next to each other while I cooked and cleaned.
- Realize you are one and they are more than one and they will learn to wait sometimes, and it's okay.
- Mix it up. Use the bouncy seat, car seat stroller, swing, whatever works.
- Plan ahead. While the babies are sleeping or you have help from someone else, pack diaper bags and make sure there is an extra bag of diapers, clothes and changing supplies in the car...
- Leave extra time when you go places with your multiples. Lots of people stop you to check them out and it takes you an extra 15 minutes to do anything because of all the fascination around multiples.

### Encouragement:

- Yes...it does get easier!
- Enjoy it! We were surprised how quickly time seemed to go by.

