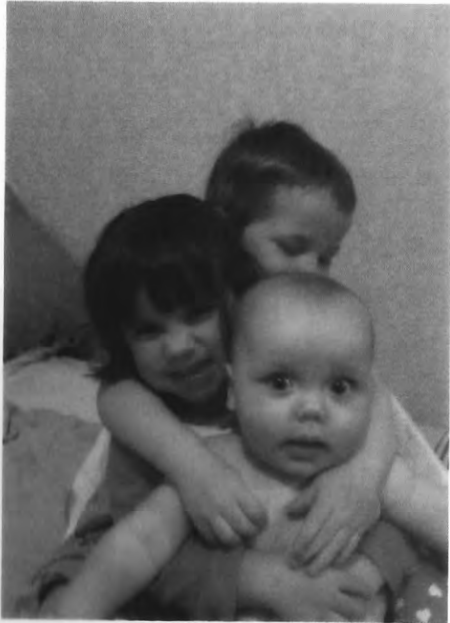


And One Makes Three

by Peveline O'Keeffe



If, three years ago, I had read an article about having a baby after twins, I would have thought it must be written by a mad woman. So I guess that now makes me the mad woman. However, now with a 7 month old singleton and a 3¼ year old twins, I feel far saner now than I did in my early "twin days".

I was probably the most surprised when – shortly before my children's second birthday – I started feeling broody. After all, I'd not taken naturally to motherhood initially, and had a lot of medical complications late on in pregnancy. But I was loving being a mum to my son and daughter, and all my friends with singletons the same age were either pregnant or popping out number two, which got me thinking.... My husband took a little more convincing. He'd always wanted more children, but he felt we should wait longer. He was mainly

concerned that we'd need a new car! I confidently (albeit based on no actual research or facts) reassured him that we didn't....

My midwife kindly sent me for a "head count" scan at seven weeks and I was relieved to be told I was carrying a single baby. The images I saw during this scan, and at all my future scans, always looked odd – to me seeing two little babies in there was much more normal and I kept thinking he looked like he had a lot of room in there, but wasn't he lonely? Great – I was going to have a "low risk pregnancy". Alas, having had a high risk pregnancy first time round (during which I had pre-eclampsia, obstetric cholestasis, polymorphic eruptions and haemorrhaging), I was tarred with that brush again. But thankfully the pregnancy continued smoothly. Consultant appointments were attended with the twins (without my husband) – a children's magazine (with stickers) and a box of raisins was all it took to keep them well behaved. And they were oddly fascinated every time I had to wee in a pot!!

I did find my second pregnancy harder than my first which I hadn't expected – after all I was only carrying one baby this time and wasn't working. But being a stay-at-home mum to two year old twins was physically far more demanding than my job ever was, and my body was definitely starting off in rougher shape than it was the first time.

We didn't really discuss my pregnancy with the children until the last few weeks. After all nine months is an incredibly long time when you're only two years old. Instead, they just knew that "mummy has a sore tummy" and not to jump on it etc. Whilst we got a couple of children's books

for them ("Mummy, Mummy, What's in Your Tummy?" and "Topsy and Tim: The New Baby" – both of which were popular reads) I don't know how much these helped them prepare.

Having had a long drive manners etc works a treat.

And three car seats can fit in the back of a normal car.... just....

Dealing with a single baby after twins seems so simple! I also feel like I've been given a second chance to appreciate being a mum of a newborn because I feel I missed out on that with the twins because I was so ill and then it was so hard. I don't really remember enjoying them in the first month-or-so because I didn't have the time or energy. Each day seemed like a challenge to try to survive rather than an experience to enjoy. Whereas, this time round I can often be found just watching my baby in amazement (while the children trash the house....).

I definitely believe that going from two to three children must be much easier than going from one to two. After all, you are already used to juggling and your children have always had to share you. I imagine that a single toddler requires entertaining when you're feeding the new baby, whereas twins have got each other to play with (aka misbehave with).

Everyone has their own way of doing things, but these are a few tips I'd offer if you're expecting number three:

- Drive to Plunket or Baby Factory and get them to try a baby car seat alongside your existing ones. We found that the basic capsule that they both hire fitted alongside our toddler car seats in our Ford Mondeo, so there was no need to rush out

to buy a bus yet, or buy special expensive car seats....

- Use a front pack with your baby, rather than a pushchair. It means you've still got two free hands for holding toddlers.

- Relax and don't stress about what mayhem the children are getting up to when you're feeding the baby. As long as your house is fairly safe, you just have to accept that they will often take this opportunity to trash it. We've had lipstick (I didn't realise I still even owned one) drawn on the bathroom wall, complete loo rolls flushed down the loo, bookcases completely emptied etc, but in the greater scheme of things, it really doesn't matter.

- Give the toddlers helpful but basic baby-related jobs so they feel that they're being helpful and grown-up. Our toddlers choose his next bib (he's a prolific dribbler) and wash his feet in the bath.

- Enrol your children in kindergarten. Our twins started about three weeks after our baby was born, when they were 2¾ (kindergartens in our area, Tawa, are taking children from around 2 years old at the moment). Just three sessions a week of 2 hours were enough to keep me sane (just about). And it's free. On occasions it even allowed me to practice the piece of advice that is near-on impossible when you have twins – "sleep when baby sleeps"!

- Encourage your twins to be independent. If they can dress themselves, go to the loo, wash their hands etc on their own, then these are all things that you don't have to do when you're busy with a newborn. Although prepare for those "how did my life become this" moments of breastfeeding baby whilst wiping a toddler's bottom. Multi-tasking to the extreme!

•Frequently enforce that baby only drinks/eats from mummy's breast (or from mummy/daddy's bottle) to prevent siblings sharing their food with baby before baby is old enough.

•Tell the older siblings not to share their toys with baby when young – this hopefully helps to keep small choking hazards away.

•We've found "Baby Led Weaning" has made weaning and mealtimes super simple – baby eats exactly the same as us from the first day that we introduced solids.

•Get used to saying the word "gently" – you'll say it about a hundred times a day when your heavy-handed toddlers play with the baby....

Thank you to the Wellington Multiple Birth Club for supplying us with this article. Peveline O'Keeffe is the current secretary of WMBC, she is British with a Kiwi husband and they had their twins in the UK. They moved here a couple of years ago and her singleton is now 1 years old.

playgroup update

ROTORUA

From Rachel Sharp,
Rotorua Playgroup Coordinator

Rotorua playgroup has been on holiday so not much to report. We hope everyone enjoyed a safe and happy Christmas and New Year with your families.

Looking forward to February 21st when we will be doing waterplay with bubbles so bring a towel and change of clothes and of course lots of sunscreen.

In March we hope to paint a mural if the weather is fine and April will be a crafty month for us.

Looking forward to seeing you there and welcoming new families that have joined the group.

Rachel

Rotorua Playgroup is held on the 3rd Friday each month from 9:30am to 11am
Plunket Rooms, 1436 Pukuatua St
Rotorua

Activities by PORSE
Gold coin donation please

WHAKATANE

From Jules Gladwin,
Whakatane Playgroup Coordinator

We are meeting again after our break for the Christmas holidays! First and third Wednesdays of the month at St. Nicholas Church in Ohope. All welcome. First catch up will be on Wednesday 5th February 2014 at 9.30am. See you there :)

We meet at St. Nicholas Church in Ohope on the first and third Wednesdays of the month. Gold Coin donation and everyone is welcome.

Jules

Whakatane Playgroup is held on the 1st & 3rd Wednesday of the month during school term time 9:30am to 11am
at St Nicholas Church, Ohope

Activities by PORSE
Gold coin donation please

playgroup update

TAURANGA

From Eleanor Hamilton-Weber,
Tauranga Playgroup Coordinator

Welcome to the New Year. I hope everyone has had a safe and prosperous holiday season. Playgroup has started and we are really looking forward to seeing some new faces at Playgroup. I really encourage if you haven't come before please do. The mums and kids alike all have a great time. There is noise, hustle and bustle and lots of fun. It is a great meeting place for mums to meet like-minded mums and talk about "twin stuff". It is a great support network and has been very helpful to me in my time as a twin mum to bounce ideas off other people.

The time has come for me to unfortunately resign from my position as Playgroup Coordinator and Magazine distributor. My family need me more now, paid work is taking off and my health unfortunately is not making things easy for us. It has been such a fun job to have (if you can really call it a job) watching my children play and learn with other twins and we have definitely made some lifelong friends. If anyone out there is interested in taking on these roles please do so. It is a fun position and has been a great joy to me. Thank you to all those people who have made my time as Coordinator so great.

Hopefully we see some more of you at playgroup. We have lots of fun activity

Tauranga Playgroup is held on Mondays
9:30am to 11:30am
at Welcome Bay Plunket

Gold coin donation please
(closed Public Holidays)



playgroups planned with a chance for the kids to get crafty.

See you all soon.

Eleanor

