

*National  
Organization of  
Mothers  
Of  
Twins  
Clubs, Inc.*

SUBJECT:

TRIPLET/QUAD STUDY

RESEARCHER: Parents of Multiple Birth Association of Canada (POMBA)  
National Organization of Mothers of Twins Clubs, Inc. (NOMOTC)

DATE:

1986

**PURPOSE:** The activity level on behalf of families with triplets, quads, or more has increased dramatically in all multiple birth organizations over the past 5 years and research on higher order multiple pregnancy has become more prominent in professional studies as well.

1. To update information on triplet/quad pregnancy, family needs and raising triplets and quads in the toddler-school years, in order to revise and enlarge POMBA's previous booklet.
2. To establish need for help in the home.
3. To establish the degree of financial aid available to parents and suggestions for ways to improve this situation.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Eighty-nine sets of triplet parents and eight sets of quads parents from membership of member clubs of POMBA (Canada), NOMOTC (USA), and parents registered with the Canadian Triplet/Quad Registry.

**RESULTS:**

**General Information:** All but 12 sets of triplets and quads were 6 years old or younger. Sex and type of triplet participants were as follows: Identical girls 11%; Fraternal girls 9%; Identical Boys 7%; Fraternal Boys 4% and Mixed Sex/Type 69%. Sex and type of quad participants were: One set of identical girls, 1 set of fraternal girls, no identical boys, 2 sets of fraternal boys and four sets of mixed sex/type. Forty-two percent of the triplet mothers used fertility drugs while 63% of quad mothers used fertility drugs. All but one mother in this sample were married when the multiples were born. Seven mothers have since separated or divorced (6 triplet, 1 quad). All state that the multiple birth did have some effect on the breakdown of their marriage.

**Pregnancy & Delivery:** Forty-one percent of triplet mothers and 71% of quad mothers required 8 or more weeks of bed rest. Reasons given for bed rest were to prevent pre-term labor, early dilation of cervix, and toxemia or exhaustion of mother. Most common problems of mothers were exhaustion, inability to rest comfortably, breathing, eating adequate amounts, nausea, very emotional and mood swings. All quads were delivered by c-section while 20% of triplets were delivered vaginally, 75% by c-section, and 5% were delivered both vaginally and by c-section. Seventy-seven percent of the triplets and 63% of the quads were delivered prior to or at 36 weeks. Triplet and quad babies remained in the hospital longer than singletons. It is interesting to note that USA mothers and babies were discharged earlier than Canadians. The most common health problems with triplet and quad babies are lung problems, heart, digestion and jaundice.

**Feeding:** Forty-seven percent of triplet babies were breastfed, and 63% of the quad mothers participating in this study breastfed their babies. Most bottlefed babies were propped in infant seats while feeding, and several mothers reported helpers at feeding times for the first three months at least.

**Help in the Home:** Seventy-two percent of triplet mothers received some form of help while all of the quad mothers received some form of help in the home with the babies. The most common sources of help were family, friends and volunteers. Thirty-seven percent of triplet families and 75% of quad families received some form of assistance from family, social services, welfare, community and friends.

Parents found organizing time, feeding infants, time for housework, siblings, marriage, nosy public, media, isolation, lack of sleep, lack of "self" time and debt the most difficult things to handle after the birth of their multiples.

**Financial Assistance:** Over 50% of respondents reported receiving no financial help; however, those receiving some form of assistance received over half of it from family members. Those receiving no financial help felt that some assistance would have relieved stress and provided needed home help. Forms of assistance options were family allowance extension, provincial gift and guaranteed loans. Major expenses were renovation of current home, moving to larger home, larger car, formula, food, baby equipment, lost second salary, paid help, clothing, drugs, babysitters, and diaper services and disposables. Seventy-five percent received free offers from baby product companies.

**Toddlers:** The biggest problem areas with triplet and quad toddlers were: fighting, biting (No. 1 problem), pairing off, delayed motor activity, speech delay, small for age, multiples clung together, sharing toys, etc. (No. 2 problem), safety, traveling by car, train or plane, toilet training, outings, discipline (No.3 problem) and one child being dominant.

Suggestions for playtime were using gates on stairs, keeping bathroom locked and kitchen gated off, babyproofing whole house, just in case, using half doors on rooms instead of gates, and using hooks on doors to rooms you don't want them playing in. These mothers suggested saving money by buying used toys, buying group activity toys, avoiding toys that could be used as weapons, and recycle toys through the week for variety. Some suggested toys were: Duplo and Lego, Nerf, all Fisher-Price activity sets with extra little people, stuffed animals and soft dolls, and Tupperware to store toys and stacking activity.

The most effective methods of disciplining according to these mothers is: Spanking, distracting, taking away privileges, and isolating offenders, rewarding good behavior and using a "time-out" chair.

Suggestions for toilet training include a "star" chart so children can see their progress, lots of praise and encouragement and promises of fancy underwear. Children should be 2-3 years old to understand the process. Don't start too soon to avoid frustrations.

Suggestions for outings with the triplets and quads include be patient, people are curious, dress them differently so not obvious, enjoy the attention, explain to people that your time is limited, and allow extra time for the attention.

By age four, most participants in the study were involved in nursery school, organized play groups, lessons, playtime exchange with friends, Sunday School and library activities. Sixty-three percent received some discounts for nursery school or lessons. Comments from mothers with preschool triplets and quads concerning rivalry include remove objects that cause rivalry, make private time for each child, watch for one feeling left out, and as each becomes more self confident, there is less rivalry.

**School:** Of the 50 sets of triplets in kindergarten, 33 were all placed together. School placement (together or separated) was decided by parents in 67% of the situations. However, 60% of the triplet and quad parents felt that multiples do better when separated.