



Childcare Options for Multiples

BASIC CHILDCARE OPTIONS:

1. **Parent Caregiver** - one parent is the primary caregiver for the babies. This is the ideal but requires a one-income household.
2. **In-home Caregiver** - the caregiver comes to your home. These include part-time babysitters, day- or night-time nannies, and live-in/out au pairs. References should be thoroughly checked.
3. **Family Day Care Home** - your children are cared for in the caregiver's home. Some care for infants only, others have a wide range of ages. Check the facility's license if required by law.
4. **Day Care Center** - the children are taken to a facility where groups of children are cared for. Some employers have on-site day care, while others have agreements with certain facilities. Check the facility's license, it should be openly displayed.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Talk to your pediatrician. Premature babies and those who have had complications are at higher risk for illnesses and may not be candidates for group care.
- Look at your personal finances. What can you afford each month? Is it possible that having one parent staying home (don't forget to subtract the extra gasoline, clothes, eating out etc.) will be less expensive than both returning to work and paying for care?
- Start early. The facility will need two or three openings at the same time for your twins or triplets, and most programs have a waiting list. Ask friends, relatives, co-workers for recommendations. Contact agencies that procure nannies and au pairs and get all of your information in writing. As a last resort, advertise for a position in the newspaper.

GENERAL QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN YOU VISIT THE FACILITY AND INTERVIEW EACH POTENTIAL CAREGIVER.

- What are the policies for multiple children? Is there a family discount?
- Are multiples placed in the same room, with the same caregiver? Or does policy require separation?
- Are parents encouraged to drop in without notice or are there specific "visiting" times? Are there webcam options for viewing your child?
- Are breastfeeding mothers met with approval and encouragement, or is breastfeeding and handling breast milk viewed as a hassle for the caregivers?

DOES THE CAREGIVER:

- Appear to be warm and friendly, seem calm and gentle, someone with whom you can develop a relaxed sharing relationship?
- Treat each child as special?
- Understand what children can and want to do at different stages of growth?
- Seem to have enough time to look after all the children in her care, particularly more than one of the same age?
- Take time to discuss your children's needs?
- Have previous experience or training with multiples?
- Seem to enjoy cuddling babies?
- Care for the babies' physical needs such as feeding and diapering?
- Spend time holding, playing with, talking to the babies in her care?
- Provide stimulation by pointing out things to look at, touch, listen to?

DOES THE FACILITY HAVE:

- An up-to-date license, if required?
- A clean, comfortable look?
- Enough space indoors and out so that children can move about safely and freely?
- Enough caregivers to meet the needs of all the children? What is the child/caregiver ratio for babies, for toddlers?
- Enough furniture, cribs, toys and equipment for all the children?
- Safety measures intact (caps on electrical outlets, covered radiators, heaters, door latches; cleansers, poisons, medicines, tools in a secured location)?
- Gates at the top and bottom of stairs?
- Equipment that is safe and in good repair?
- Fire and emergency plans, smoke detectors, fire extinguisher, first aid kits?
- Enough heat, light and ventilation?
- Nutritious meals and snacks?
- A separate place for sick children?
- Appropriate bathroom facilities for children?
- A clean and safe diaper changing place? What is the policy for handwashing, gloves, and disposal of diapers?
- Cribs with narrow slats and firm mattresses, and separate, clean sheets for each baby.

Think carefully about the type of childcare you want and can afford for your babies. Check out each option and make the decision that is best for you and your family.