

Money Saving with Multiples



The birth of two or more children at the same time can be a drain on even well-managed finances. Here are some tips to help you plan ahead for the extra expenses and maybe even save money when having to spend.

- Start keeping track now of household expenses. For two weeks, ideally one month, write down and keep track of every penny you spend. Have you and your spouse carry a small notebook to make notes of expenses for gas, lunches out, cups of coffee etc. At the end of the month list what your expenses were and where your money actually went. You will be very surprised at how much you actually spend. This will give you an idea of necessary and not-so-necessary expenses when planning your budget.
- Develop a budget now if you do not already have one, then plan a budget for possible bedrest, hospitalization, well and sick babies and postpartum.
- Restructure your lifestyle to eliminate unnecessary expenses. Areas to consider are: meals out, lunches at work, convenience foods, magazine subscriptions, book and music clubs, video rentals, subscriptions to ballparks, theaters, or concerts. Some parents even eliminate cable television, newspaper subscriptions, and health club memberships.
- Consider breastfeeding now. Read up and take a breastfeeding class for the best success. Even higher order multiple moms can nurse their babies. It is healthiest for babies, helps keep health care expenses down, and helps mom get back into shape quicker.
- If formula feeding, ask your pediatrician and the formula company for free samples. Don't leave the hospital without some free samples of formula. Shop around for the best price on formula. The powdered version is usually the least expensive. The cost of using powdered formula ranges from \$0.11/oz to \$0.35/oz, or about \$100 to \$330 per baby each month. Formula concentrate and ready to feed formulas are even more costly.
- Find out if you are eligible for WIC (Women, Infant and Children Federal Program) for all children under 5 years and breastfeeding moms. WIC will provide powdered formula, milk, fruit juice, eggs, cheese, and peanut butter. Consider your income after the babies come if one parent is planning to stay home with your multiples when applying for this program.
- Consider now the expense of childcare versus one parent staying at home. Consider cost of daycare, work clothes, transportation, meals at work, taxes and other withholding. Also consider other work related expenses such as household help, convenience meals and other items that you feel you would need to manage work and children. Many dads now stay at home as the primary care provider for their children.
- Begin to shop now at garage sales and multiples clubs sales for large equipment and layette items. Borrow as much as you can from friends and family. Request big items as joint gifts at baby showers. Run ads in multiple club newsletters for twin and triple strollers, cribs and jogging strollers for the best deals.

- Washing cloth diapers at home might be the cheapest way to diaper your babies, but not the easiest one. If you plan to use cloth, consider a diaper service for convenience; ask about a multiples discount. Shop around for the best prices for disposable diapers. Try warehouse, diaper outlets, store brands and use coupons. Begin stocking up on diapers and baby wipes to spread out the initial expense. Plan for 150-180 diapers for twins and 200-220 for triplets and 230-250 for quads per WEEK. For preemie diapers ask the NICU staff about home ordering directly from the manufacturer.
- Clip and use coupons for baby items, formula and food. Most companies list a toll-free number on their products. Call and ask for more coupons, tell them how many babies you have. For triplets and more, some companies may send a week's or month's supply of free samples.
- Do not be shy about asking store for a multiples discount; many larger chains have a system in place. Ask small local stores that you patronize as well, it never hurts to ask. If you are using commercial daycare ask about sibling discounts. Some pediatricians will discount visits on multiples, however, managed care may not allow this practice.
- Be cautious about nice-but-not-necessary baby items, such as jumpers, swings, wipe warmers, and other such items. Borrow or buy one second hand to see if your babies like it before buying more.
- Learn to cook. This sounds so simple and easy, but it is the easiest way to save money. Cook up large servings and freeze portions for quick meals. Use these quick meals on days you are tired and tempted to call out for pizza or Chinese food. Ask for home-cooked meals from friends and family when you first bring the babies home.
- Immunizations can be your mostly costly healthcare expense if not covered by your insurance company. Most HMOs generally cover well baby visits and immunizations. Some traditional plans do not. Find out now to plan for this expense. Immunizations can be expensive and most babies get two or three per visit! If your plan does not cover them, consider utilizing your local health department for free or low-cost immunizations.

Resources for money saving ideas and tips:

- The *Tightwad Gazette* series by Amy Dacyczyn, Random House. These books contain lots of money saving ideas, some easy, some far-fetched, but great reading. Dacyczyn is the mother of six, including boy/girl twins.