

《喜事连连 英女子一年连生4个宝宝》

With four babies under the age of 18 months, no wonder proud but exhausted parents Sarah Ward and Benn Smith end up prone on two sofas most evenings with barely enough energy to lift a cup of tea to their lips.

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Seven-month-old triplets Stanley, Reggie and Daisy — born just nine months after their big brother Freddie — may be bonny little chunks of gorgeousness, bestowing gummy smiles on all and sundry, but they are highly labour-intensive.

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This, they both admit, is a far cry from the scene they envisaged when they first talked about starting a family three years ago. They imagined two children, hopefully one of each, nicely spaced apart.

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Mother Nature had other ideas, and just weeks after giving birth to Freddie, in June 2013, Sarah naturally conceived the triplets — a one-in-8,000 chance.

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'It was lovely at first, but when everyone asks the same questions over and over again it does start to grate a little

bit,' admits Sarah. 'I'm thinking of having a T-shirt made with the words: "Yes, they're all mine. No, they're not IVF triplets and, yes, I'm in a rush!"'

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'It's been incredibly hard, but we see all our children as a blessing and feel incredibly lucky,' says Benn. 'When the triplets started smiling and laughing at us, that's when we really started to enjoy it, and we can't wait until they start toddling.

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At birth, Stanley, Reggie and Daisy were taken to intensive care weighing 3 lb 12oz, 4 lb 7oz and 3 lb 14oz respectively, but today Stanley is the biggest: a bouncing 15 lb 14oz.

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The triplets are all the more remarkable because Sarah and Benn were convinced they had fertility problems and feared Freddie might be an only child.

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Worried that her menstrual cycle had not returned to normal after the birth, Sarah took a home pregnancy test as a precaution — fully expecting it to be negative.

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Stunned at the positive result, she sent a picture message of the test to Benn, with the words 'Guess what?' He almost fell off his chair at work.

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But more surprises were in store. An early six-week scan revealed two sacs, indicating a twin pregnancy.

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Which was just as well, because at the 12-week scan the sonographer detected a third heart-beat and informed Sarah and Benn that they were expecting triplets.

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The couple have never regretted that decision, but Sarah admits her pregnancy was both physically and emotionally arduous, filled with anguish and fear for the future and guilt over how little time she could devote to baby Freddie.

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With four such young children, Sarah plans to put her career on hold until they are older, while Benn is hoping to transfer to a new role closer to home. Even so, it is a struggle surviving on one salary — half of which goes on their £888-a-month rent.

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Sarah says: 'We just have to budget and forget about luxuries. We bulk-buy nappies and formula milk so we never run out and just manage the best we can.

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'We feel incredibly lucky, and just can't imagine life without them.'

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