



Preparing for a New Sibling

Congratulations on your growing family! We're so excited for you as you welcome a new baby into your home! Having a sibling is such a special experience, and it's wonderful to see your family grow. We've put together some helpful tips to support you and your older child through the transition and help everyone adjust to the changes that come with a new sibling.

Establishing Routines Before Baby Arrives

- **Start New Routines Early:** It's important to begin making small changes to your child's daily routines before the baby arrives. This helps prevent any resentment later on. For example, try to introduce a little more independence for your older child now, so they're not suddenly overwhelmed when the baby comes.
- **Encourage Independence:** With a new baby, you'll need your child to do more for themselves. You can start building this into your day now, by letting them help with small tasks or giving them more chances to play independently while you focus on other things.
- **Special One-on-One Time:** Find something special that each parent can do with the older child. Whether it's reading together, making a snack, or taking a walk, having dedicated time will show your child they are still important and loved, even as the family dynamic changes.

Talking to Your Child About the New Baby

- **Involve Them in the Process:** Show your child ultrasound pictures, let them help set up the nursery, and read books about babies. Talking about the baby ahead of time will help them feel part of the excitement.
- **Avoid Apologizing:** Don't apologize for the changes the new baby will bring. Instead of saying, "I'm sorry I can't play right now, I have to feed the baby," try, "The baby is hungry right now, but I'll be happy to play with you as soon as she's done."
- **Be Positive:** Your child looks to you for emotional cues. If you're calm and excited about the new baby, they'll be more likely to feel positive about the changes as well. Focus on the exciting things ahead!
- **Let Your Child Join In on Their Own Time:** While it's wonderful to encourage your child to help care for the baby, don't force it. Instead, model caring for the baby yourself, and when your child shows interest, they will naturally want to be involved.

Adjusting to Life with a New Sibling

- **The Early Months Aren't Always as Hard as You Might Think:** A newborn's first few months are often easier for older siblings than many parents expect. Babies sleep a lot and don't move much, so they're not as likely to disrupt your older child's routine. The first few months can actually be a time when the family bonds and adjusts more smoothly, without the baby's growing curiosity or physical movement causing much disruption.
- **The Real Transition Happens When Baby Starts Moving:** The bigger challenge often comes when the baby begins to crawl, grab things, or show an interest in toys. Suddenly, your older child may feel the baby is "taking over" or competing for their things. This can bring about a bigger regression or increased frustration for your older child. While we often prepare children for the arrival of the baby, we don't always prepare them for the fact that one day, the baby will be a toddler, a "little kid," with their own needs, toys, and attention to demand. This shift can catch them off guard.
- **Expect Regression:** It's normal for your child to revert to younger behaviors—like being more whiny, clingy, or even experiencing potty training setbacks—especially as the baby grows more mobile. This is usually a sign that your older child is seeking reassurance or attention during a time of change. Having consistent routines and ensuring each child gets individual attention each day can really help ease this phase.
- **Balance Attention:** Avoid the trap of one parent always taking care of the baby while the other focuses on the older child. Both parents should spend one-on-one time with each child daily to help them feel secure and loved.
- **Stay Patient:** As your older child adjusts to their new role in the family, they may test limits or act out. This is a normal part of the process. Stay patient, set clear boundaries, and be consistent in your responses.
- **Avoid Comparisons:** Don't label your older child as the "big kid" or compare them to the baby. This can lead to resentment. Instead, give your child the space to be themselves and show them that they are still your baby too. For example, instead of saying, "You can do this because you're the big kid now," say, "It's time to put on your shoes. Would you like to do it yourself, or should I help you?"
- **Teach Sharing and Turn-Taking:** While your baby won't understand sharing at first, it's important to teach your older child that taking turns is part of being a family. If the baby grabs something, don't just say "She's a baby, she doesn't know better." Instead, model turn-taking: "Your sister is playing with that right now. Would you like to play with something else?" This sets clear expectations for both children and helps prevent frustration.

Navigating the Change

- **Prepare for Milestones:** As the baby grows and hits milestones like crawling, walking, and talking, your older child might experience some frustration as they realize their sibling is becoming more independent and curious. It's important to keep encouraging your older child's sense of autonomy while also giving them space to adjust to the changes.
- **Remember, It's All Part of the Process:** There will be ups and downs, but this transition doesn't last forever. Your older child will adapt, and soon the whole family will be enjoying the exciting changes that come with having a sibling. Take a deep breath, focus on the positive, and don't worry—your child is more adaptable than you think!

We're here for you every step of the way. If you ever need advice or help problem-solving specific challenges, don't hesitate to reach out. Congratulations again on this exciting new chapter in your family's life!