

Preparing Your Child for a New Sibling

- When you bring the new baby home you may find it helpful to post a note on your door that reads: *"Welcome to our home and we look forward to you meeting our new baby. FIRST, please take a moment to speak with [your older child's name]. Please ask our older child to introduce you to the baby."* By taking this approach you remind visitors that your older child has always been the focus of initial contact for these visitors and will rapidly notice how the focus has moved to the baby. This reminder helps the older child feel important. The baby isn't really interested in the fact that these people have come to meet them.
- As much as we adults love getting gifts, let your older child be the one to open the gifts. It will help them feel involved.
- Have a few gifts for your older child for those occasions when guests have only brought something for the baby.
- Try not to make too many changes to your older child's routine too close to the delivery. If you are going to move your child out of a crib, into another room, or into a new day care, it would be better to do it at least two months before the baby is born.
- Do not try and teach your older child new skills close to the delivery date (potty training, weaning from a bottle, moving to a new bed).
- Expect your child to act like a baby to see what kind of a reaction you will give. ***Remember: the more you react (i.e.: "big boys don't pee in their pants," or "big girls don't sleep in cribs") the more the baby-like behaviour will persist.*** Try to be patient. This behaviour is NORMAL - no matter who says that it isn't.
- Allow your older child to hold the baby whenever they want. Teach them how to hold the baby safely. This will fill their desire to hold the baby and assure that they understand that it is only okay to do so when you are there to help.
- Spend time making a game out of the kinds of strange noises that you may make when you are in labour. If your child wakes up in the middle of the night and hears you labouring it may be frightening. By making a game out of this ahead of time they will be more willing to accept the sounds instead of being scared and will not be so quick to blame the baby for "hurting" you. ***This is ESPECIALLY important if you are planning to have your baby at home and there is an increased likelihood that your older child will hear you in labour.***
- Do your very best to avoid using the baby as an excuse for not being able to do something. For example: your older child wants a glass of water. It is easy to say, "I can't get it right now because I am feeding the baby." This answer may very well incite resentment for the baby from the older child because if it weren't for the baby, you would be able to get the water. Instead try: "I am in the middle of something else. As soon as I have a moment, I will get that glass of water for you." Says the same thing but doesn't mention the baby. It's amazing and surprising how well this works.
- Talk about when your older child was a baby and show pictures of when they were an infant illustrating what the baby will require from you in terms of care.
- Take your older child to your care provider visits so they can hear the baby's heartbeat and meet your care team. *During times where children are not able to attend appointments as well, watch videos of the process on YouTube.*
- Talk in terms of "we are going to have a baby." It is okay if your older child refers to the baby as "my baby."
- Have your child help with the baby's room and buying clothes and toys. Discuss toy safety for the baby.
- Allow your older child to buy a gift special for the baby and remind them to give it to the baby the first time they meet the baby.

- Try to have a gift for your older child that is something they have been really wanting. Make this a gift for them from the baby. Sure it's bribery but they don't know that!
- If you are delivering your baby in the hospital then talk to your older child about the fact that you will be away. If they will be spending a night away somewhere then it may be helpful to have a practise run ahead of time. Alternatively, if someone is coming to stay with your older child, have them come and stay while you (and your partner, if you have one) have a night away - even if it is just to swap houses for a night.
- Allow your child to select the baby's coming-home outfit.
- Check out and read together library books written about what it is like to have a new baby in the house.
See attached list for story suggestions
- Reassure your child that you have plenty of love for everyone, that includes both them AND the new baby.
- Emphasize that it is fun being the older sibling. Your child will get to show off the baby to friends, teach the baby how to eat, drink and play.
- Let your child use a doll or stuffed animal to practice changing diapers, putting on clothes, and holding.
REMEMBER: this is YOUR baby though and the interest in "helping" you out by doing little jobs for you (like getting a diaper or toy, etc.) will lose appeal VERY quickly. Remember that you wanted a sibling for your child and try to keep that in mind when they don't want to help. Don't make your older child feel guilty for not wanting to do the little things you feel you lack the time or ability to easily do.
- Have a special stack of books that you and your older child only read while you are feeding the baby. Have special toys that only come out at this time. This helps make the time you spend sitting and feeding the baby special for all three of you.
- Tell your older child that you will always have special time for them and mean it. Make time to spend one-on-one with them every day and plan little excursions that are just for the two of you on a regular basis.
- Create a book for your older child that is filled with photographs of them and of your family through their life to this point

BOOK IDEAS (for children):

Benjamin, Judith. <i>And Baby Makes 4 - same sex family expecting another child</i>	For parents:	
Tracy, Tom. <i>Some Families, All Families</i>	Faber, Adele & Mazlish, Elaine. <i>Siblings without Rivalry: How to Help Your Children Live Together So You Can Live Too, Revised 2012</i>	
Kirst, Seamus, <i>Harper Becomes a Big Sister</i>	Sears, William & Robert W. et al., <i>The Sears Baby Book: Everything You Need To Know About Your Baby from Birth to Age Two</i>	
Alexander, Martha. <i>Nobody Asked Me If I Wanted a Baby Sister</i>	Clarke-Fields, Hunter MSAE. <i>Raising Good Humans: A Mindful Guide to Breaking the Cycle of Reactive Parenting and Raising Kind, Confident Kids</i>	
Olson, Allison. <i>Surrounded by Love: An Open Adoption Story</i>	Moreno Carranza, Bibiana, Joyce, Jayne et al. <i>The Art of Breastfeeding: Completely Revised and</i>	