

How can I help my child adjust after the baby is home?

- Allow your child to meet the baby when there are no other visitors around. This helps to begin the process of bonding as a family!
- Stick to your previously established routines as much as possible.
- Make sure to remind visitors to acknowledge your older child.
- Encourage and praise your child for extra small tasks they may accomplish around the house. Make sure they know how much you appreciate the help.
- Let your older child help with the baby's care when appropriate. Some children do not seem to be interested in (or actively avoid) the new baby. Don't worry or force the interaction. Let your older child have some time to adjust and let him or her approach when they are comfortable.

Review: How can I manage behavior changes I notice in my child?

Learn to **ACCEPT!**

- Remain **ATTENTIVE** to your older child and their needs.
- Remain **CALM** as your older child adjusts to the changes at home.
- Be **CONSISTENT** with schedules and consequences for misbehaviors.
- **EXPLAIN** all of the changes and help your child to understand what to expect.
- **PLAY** is the fundamental way for children to learn about relationships. Playing with your child is incredibly important to maintain a strong bond.
- Remember that **TRANSITIONS** should be gradual. Children function the best when change is introduced slowly over the course of time.

Becoming a Big Brother or Sister: Helping your child adjust to their new role



A new baby requires families to make big changes in preparation for their arrival. For an adult, it's easy to understand why these changes are necessary. For the big brother or sister-to-be, making sense of all the adjustments is a major challenge.

As parents, it is essential to plan in advance for the emotional and behavioral changes that a new sibling may experience when a baby is on the way.

What are some changes I may notice in my child's behavior?

Some children adjust well to a new baby; however, most parents see some behavioral changes in the older child. Common issues include:

- Regression: Some children go through a period where their behavior “regresses” or they start to act more like a baby. A child may want a bottle or have wetting accidents. This is a way for your young child to communicate that they want your attention and the nurturing that is being provided to the new baby.
- Acting out or disruptive behaviors: Children may use disruptive behavior as a way to get the attention they desire. Parents are more likely to attend to negative over the positive behaviors when they are tired or busy.
- Aggression toward the new baby: The sudden shift of attention to the new baby is alarming to the older child. They are not old enough to understand all of the feelings they are experiencing: fear of losing a parent's love, jealousy, anger, and sadness because of the focus on the baby. All of these emotions may cause a child physically to lash out.
- Being extra clingy: You may find that after the birth of the baby, your older child may stick close to you throughout the house or become unusually upset when separated from you.

You should also keep in mind that your parenting behavior may change— the fatigue of having a newborn can make you more impatient, less attentive, or less likely to follow through with consequences for misbehaviors.



How can I prepare my child ahead of time for their new baby sibling?

Provide your child with education and expectations of what will happen before the baby arrives.

- Read your child age-appropriate books about pregnancy, newborns, and life as a big sibling. Discuss feelings your child may have about the baby. Answer questions honestly, but keep it developmentally appropriate.
- Let your child know that the baby is too young to play and that babies spend their time sleeping and eating.
- Explain that you will have to do a lot for the baby, but ensure your child that you will set aside special time for the two of you to play.

Start transitions early when possible.

- If your child has to share a room with the baby or will be moved into a new room, start the transition well before the baby is born. This will give your child time to adjust.
- Start changes in schedule or daycare arrangements before the baby is born.
- Get in the habit of referring to the baby as “your little brother (sister)” when talking to your child. This reduces the feeling of being replaced and helps to promote sibling bonding.

Help your child practice being a big brother or sister. Let them be involved in the preparations.

- Use a doll to help your child learn how to hold and feed a baby.
- Let your child organize the baby's room, attend a prenatal appointment, and/or allow them to help with selecting the baby's name.
- Let your child help you pack for the hospital by choosing what the baby will wear coming home from the hospital or packing a gift for him/her to give to the baby.

Affirm the child's importance and praise them for their independence.

- Nurture your child's need for attention. Give them at least 5-10 minutes of individual play time each day. Special time greatly reduces the likelihood of negative attention-seeking behaviors.
- Show your child their baby pictures and/or baby book! Kids like to hear stories of what they were like as a baby and allows them to feel special.