

Preparing Your Child for the Birth of Another Child

When Should You Have a Another Child?

- The age between one child and another is relatively unimportant
- When deciding on having another child think about what is best for your family. Think about what is best for your work situations, finances, health, energy level, and personal preference
- According to doctors, you should wait at least six months after the birth of one child before getting pregnant again
- Becoming pregnant in less than six months after the birth of a child is more likely to cause the second child to be premature or to have low birth weight
- Becoming pregnant too soon after the birth a child can be bad for the health of the mother

How to Tell Your Child About the Upcoming Birth

- **Timing**
 - Wait until after the first three months
 - Chance of a miscarriage is highest in the first three months
 - Children become impatient if told too soon
 - Tell your child as soon after the first three months as possible
 - Give the date in way that is meaningful to the child. i.e. “Soon after Halloween.”
- **Telling Your Child About the Upcoming Birth**
 - Present the news in a positive light. “You’re so lucky, you’re going to be a big brother!”
 - Talk in terms the child can understand
 - When the due date draws near explain to the child what to expect in realistic terms
 - Explain to the child that mom may be limited in her physical activities after giving birth
 - Reassure the child about what will happen to him or her when mom goes to the hospital
 - Give him or her something that will help the child feel a connection with you while you’re at the hospital
 - Provide the older child with an adult support person to tend to their needs during the hospitalization
 - If possible have the child visit mom in the hospital after the birth
 - Don’t be alarmed if the child is anxious or shows regression during the visit
 - Give the child a present when she visits the hospital
 - Helps the child feel special
 - Help the child develop realistic expectations
 - Avoid giving the child the expectation that the baby will provide instant fun or that the baby is for them
 - Explain to the child that having a sibling will not lessen the parents love for that child
 - If there are going to be changes in the child’s life, such as sleeping in another room or going to day care, make the changes at least a month before the birth
 - Keep cuddling with the older child
 - Maintain the older child’s routine as much as possible
 - Involve the child in preparations for the upcoming birth

How do you help your child not feel resentful or displaced?

- Help the child adapt and take pride in their new role in the family
- Praise your older child when she is helpful, self reliant, or shows maturity but keep your expectation age appropriate
- Set time aside to spend some time alone with the older child
- Allow the older child to have some possessions that are theirs alone
- Go through scrapbooks of the older child's baby pictures with him
- Treat both children fairly, don't play favorites

What should you expect from your older child after the birth?

- Many children show some regression to immature behaviors after the birth of another child.
- This is temporary dissipating within a year
- Don't criticize this behavior instead provide the child with reassurance and praise when they exhibit more mature behavior

How do we respond to our child's frustration about the new baby?

- Acknowledge the child's feelings and help them express these feelings in appropriate ways
- Help the child know they can express anger about the new baby but they can not hurt the baby
- Provide the child with opportunities to express and explore their feelings through pretend play activities
- Find age appropriate task the child can do to help with the baby
- Praise the child for their efforts
- Don't press the issue if the child show no interest in child care duties

Helping your children accept and like one another

- Highlight to your older children how much the younger child likes them
- Teach and coach your children on how to get along and play together
- Children do not automatically know how to get along
 - Complement and praise your children when they act kind towards one another
 - Give your children the chance to work out difficulties between themselves
 - Refrain from correcting and criticizing the older child's behavior
 - Teach children problem solving and social skills