

Parenting Together

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Preparing Older Siblings for a New Baby

Welcoming a new baby into the family can be both an exciting as well as a challenging time for a big brother or sister. How you choose to tell children about the new baby and prepare them for changes in the family will vary depending on the older sibling's age, but there are some rules of thumb most experts recommend to create the best possible environment for your growing family.

Preparing older children in advance and helping them feel included in the process can go a long way to creating a smooth transition and happy family life.

According to the Child Mind Institute, the more time you give your older child to get used to the idea of a new baby in the family, the better. Experts agree it is best to tell your child about the new baby as soon as mom begins to show. However, if mom is experiencing morning sickness or has a very young child who can't be jumping on her the way he/she is used to, it may be better to tell the child even sooner. It is always best to be honest and avoid making children anxious about the changes happening in their life.



Dr. Mandi Silverman, a clinical psychologist at the Child Mind Institute, stresses that parents need to give children as much time as possible to ask all the questions they need to but also to get in some extra special alone time with each parent.

“The key thing here is that parents need to indicate that this is a positive thing for a family.”

- Dr. Mandy Silverman

The language you use to explain these changes to your child should be developmentally and age appropriate. Emphasize that this is a positive and exciting change and all the amazing and fun things a new baby will bring to the family. “There’s one more person to love,” suggests Dr. Silverman. “There’s somebody new to spend time with. Watching the baby do new things, and teaching him things, will be fun.”



The Book Nook

I Am a Big Brother! / ¡Soy un hermano mayor!

By Caroline Jayne Church

The New Baby

By Mercer Mayer

My New Baby

By Rachel Fuller



Oregon State University

To learn more about how to help your child prepare for a new baby, check out this article: <https://childmind.org/article/preparing-child-new-sibling/>

The Baby is Here

...Now What?

Think of ways to involve your child in daily routines involving the new baby and keep in mind that you know your kid best! Involve them in tasks that are best suited and most enjoyable for them. Some children might enjoy helping (i.e. grabbing a burp cloth, getting bath toys) while others prefer play time, reading, snuggling, etc. However your child likes to be involved is great! Always try to encourage their involvement and take time to praise them for their contributions! This will help smooth the transition for the whole family.

Sibling Relationships

There are numerous benefits of positive sibling relationships. Several key benefits include support, friendship, and connection. Research shows that sibling relationships can increase sympathy, which can then help to foster other pro-social behaviors like sharing, helping, and communicating. By fostering and nurturing the sibling relationship, you help teach your children to show empathy and compassion for others.



CRAFTING CORNER

A simple art project using sibling hand prints is a great activity to do with your older child to help them welcome home the new baby!

- Trace all children's hands or feet paper (construction paper, paper bags, etc.)
- Cut out the outlined hands and stack them according to age of the children on another piece of paper
- Decorate however you and your child would like

Tips to help your little ones reap the benefits of their sibling relationships:

- Encourage siblings to nurture one another.
- Find a passion they share.
- Allow for time away from each other.
- Help kids channel energy into bonding activities.
- Try not to referee fights.
- Create family traditions.
- Team up for chores.
- Get siblings in on the nighttime routine.

For more ideas, check out this article: <http://www.pbs.org/parents/expert-tips-advice/2018/05/how-to-foster-positive-sibling-relationships/>

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References

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