

NEW BABY SIBLING RIVALRY

Helpful Hints

When your child/ren come to visit the baby in the hospital for the first time, have the baby taken to the nursery before they arrive. Let them see mom, the room, the bed, the monitors, IV poles, etc. Let them ask about the baby. Act like you'd forgotten about the baby ("oh, him?"), then send dad and the child/ren to the nursery to get the baby and bring the baby to you. The last thing a toddler wants to see first is the new baby attached to mom's breast or in bed with mom.

- The new baby needs to bring the child/ren good presents.
- Let your child/ren handle the baby – they won't break it. Try to avoid the paranoid "oh, watch the soft spot, watch out for the eyes". I've never seen a sibling harm a baby purposefully.
- Write on a piece of paper "tell (baby's name) to wait". Try to do this at least once a day. Be aware of how many times you're telling your older ones to wait while you feed, change, burp, etc.
- Try for an attitude of nonchalance about the baby. For instance, when you are reading to or playing with older brother or sister and the baby squawks, say to the baby, "we're reading a book, you just ate, or you just had your diaper changed". To have the older sibling(s) volunteer to give up some of their time with you is fun to watch, and far preferable to having it taken from them. When you tell them you still love them as much as you did before the new baby came, show them that you mean it.
- Unless your older child is already out of a crib, don't take him/her out before the baby comes.
- Have a plan for what to do when you need to feed the baby and can't be "on call" for the older one(s). Ask ahead of time if he/she wants a snack or a book or a video since you're going to be busy for 30 minutes. This will happen often each day and it can be handled well or badly.
- Don't expect the older sibling(s) to be grown up about the baby or to help very much. Expect little; be happy with a little, then watch as they do more when a little is rewarded.
- There are many more, I've just touched on a few. Ask if you have specific questions.
- **KEY THOUGHT:** Treat the new baby like a second-class citizen. The first child may be the CEO in the corner office, but bring this one on at minimum wage. It's easier to go up than down.

