



# Preparing Your Toddler For A Sibling

TODDLER

ARTICLE

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3 MINS

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When a new baby arrives in the family, your oldest child gains a new status, that of the older brother or sister. But this also means that they will have to share their mummy and daddy or even their bedroom, and it is not always easy to accept. As with all relationships, sibling relationships will experience both good times and bad!

## How to help your child

Announcing to your children that they will soon have a brother or sister is a highly emotional moment! When is the best time to tell them? Usually after the first three months of pregnancy as at this point the risk of miscarriage is reduced and you may have already begun to show. **Announce the news using words that are easy to understand** and let your child express their feelings. They may jump with joy or otherwise sulk! This reaction is normal and your child needs time to get used to the

idea.

- **Talk to your child often about the new baby before the birth.** Explain what it will change in their life and remind them that you will always be there for them and that you love them. Your heart cannot be split in two, it will only grow to provide each child with an equal amount of love! You can also prepare your child by reading them stories. There are many tender and funny books on the subject!
- **After the birth**, find responsibilities for your child to take on as the "elder": feeding the baby, pushing the pushchair... Dad can also help. While you are looking after baby, dad can play with the older child or take them out for a walk... Try to make time for your older child alone, to read a story together for instance.

### **Love and hate...**

Jealousy is a natural part of the sibling relationship and it is even a positive thing! **Squabbling helps children grow up** and become independent while constructing their personality. They send out messages, mark out their territory, test their limits and, finally, gain self-confidence.

By sharing their daily life with their brother sister, they also learn how to share, negotiate, compromise, to be fair (or unfair)... In short, **the rules of life in society!**

When they squabble, **leave them to settle their differences** as long as they do not resort to violence. If they fight or the discussion turns ugly, then take a stand but without taking sides.

Put an end to the situation if it is always the same child that is trying to take influence over the other, but **always remain fair...**

**Make time for separate activities.** Shopping with mum for baby or cooking with dad for the older child... They'll be glad to have each other's company again later on!

### **The older child reverts to baby ways, is this normal?**

Upon the announcement of your pregnancy or upon the birth of the little brother or sister, does **your older child revert to wetting the bed** or ask for their bottle again at night, or demand the pushchair when out for a walk? All the little habits you thought they'd left behind...

Such regression is natural and highly frequent. **Your child is trying to attract your attention.** They need to show that they exist, when everyone only has eyes for the little wonder. It is also a way of expressing contradictory feelings that they may have at that time: jealousy, pride, hate, love.

This reaction is therefore natural but **must remain temporary.** If it lasts then discuss it with your pediatrician.