



## Preparing for a new arrival in the family

A new baby in the family can be an exciting time. Becoming a big brother or sister is a proud moment for many young children. However, it is not uncommon for both parents and children to experience a variety of emotions during this period of change. It's normal to have days when you just feel overwhelmed.

### How should I expect my child to behave when the new baby arrives?

- Toddlers and pre-school children may experience a range of emotions from excitement one moment to fear and jealousy the next.
- They may start seeking your attention more when previously they were happy and confident playing on their own.
- They may become upset more easily.
- Children may start having accidents when they have been dry during the day for a while.
- They may go back a stage in their learning and development.
- They might at first reject a new sibling.

All these behaviours are normal, and you need to keep in mind that they are temporary. Between the age of two and three, children's communication skills are less developed. This means they may not be able to fully communicate their thoughts, feelings and wishes.

Older children tend to cope better as their language skills are more advanced. Although, sometimes they may find it difficult to adjust as they have had more of your time to themselves.

Research suggests that children take up to three months to settle in to the role of big sister/brother.

If you are concerned that your child is taking longer than that to settle you should speak to your health visitor.



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### How can I help my child before the baby arrives?

In the lead up to the baby arriving, spend as much time as possible snuggled up together and talking about what is going to happen when the baby arrives.

- Explain that you are feeling excited but a little nervous and why. This helps children learn to put words to feelings.
- Share stories about being a big sister or brother and talk about what is happening in the pictures.
- Using a baby doll, play alongside your child modelling how to care for the baby and talking about what babies need.
- Wonder out loud and ask questions about the new baby, such as, I wonder if our new baby will cry? What do you think we should do if our baby cries? I wonder if our baby will sleep much? I wonder if our baby will be a hungry baby?
- Organise some play dates for your child and plan activities such as games or baking to encourage turn taking and sharing.

It is important to listen to your child's response and talk to them about any worries they may be experiencing.

### About the contributor

NDNA partnered with Acamar Films, producer of the award-winning preschool series Bing, to bring parents some helpful tips and suggestions to support them during the ups and downs of children's transitions.

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