



CARE INSTRUCTIONS

KAISER PERMANENTE

Learning About Sibling Rivalry

What is sibling rivalry?

It is normal for your older child to feel jealous when you have another baby. It may take a few months before a child shows signs of jealousy. But when your child realizes that the baby is there to stay, you may begin to see strong emotions and behavior problems.

Sibling rivalry happens between older children too. School-age children have an intense need for attention and positive feedback from their parents. Conflict often arises because children feel they are competing with their siblings for this attention.

How can you prepare for sibling rivalry?

To help prepare for sibling rivalry before a new baby arrives:

- Talk to older siblings about the new baby early in the pregnancy. Be sure to acknowledge your child's crucial role in the family. For example, you might say, "You are the baby's only big brother. You can help us teach her about life, and that's very special."
- Ask your child's opinion when getting ready for the baby, such as decorating the baby's room or picking out clothes.
- Visit your local library or bookstore to find books that teach your child about having a new baby in the home.
- Remember that sibling rivalry often gets more intense after the baby is past the newborn stage, when your older child realizes that this life change is permanent. Plan ahead for these changes by learning the techniques below for managing rivalry.

How can you manage sibling rivalry?

After a baby is born

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- Give your older child a role in daily care, such as bringing diapers, choosing the baby's clothing, holding the baby, being in charge of a toy, or pushing the stroller.
- Praise your child for helping with the baby. Remind your child how important his or her role is.
- Plan time alone with your older child.
- Reassure your child that your love for the baby will not replace the love you have for him or her.
- Prepare your child for not getting all the attention. Say things like, "Your baby brother will get a lot of attention at the party. That's because people love babies, not because they don't like you."
- Give your child extra attention when the baby is being fawned over. Ask close friends or relatives to give the older child extra attention at these times.

Managing rivalry between older siblings

- Encourage siblings to work out problems on their own when possible. Make sure they are solving the problem in a respectful way and that one child is not taking advantage of the other.
- Separate siblings when needed, such as when a conflict is not being resolved in a respectful or reasonable way. Sometimes your children will need their own space.
- Don't pick sides. Show your children that you love and support them equally, and avoid comparing them to each other.
- If you have to help manage a bigger conflict, treat each sibling fairly and listen to both sides.
- Teach your children healthy ways to disagree and resolve conflicts, and set guidelines. Children may need to be told not to yell, hit, or call each other names.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <http://www.kp.org>

Enter U245 in the search box to learn more about "**Learning About Sibling Rivalry**".

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