



A new baby in the family!

Here are some ways to prepare your toddler for a new baby:

- ⦿ don't tell a very young child too soon about the new baby. It is exciting for you, but your child will not understand. Toddlers don't have an understanding of time and how long an hour, a week or a month really is. In a toddler's life, six months or so is a very long time to be waiting for something to happen
- ⦿ tell your child later in the pregnancy when she can see what is happening. You can then involve her in visits to the doctor and helping to plan for the baby, like choosing clothes
- ⦿ some toddlers, both boys and girls, enjoy having a doll as their 'baby' and making the same sort of preparations as you do for the real baby
- ⦿ don't change your toddler from a cot to a bed too close to the birth. – she may think you are taking her cot for the baby
- ⦿ don't try to toilet train your toddler around the time of the birth unless the toddler makes it very clear that she wants to use the toilet or potty
- ⦿ plan ahead for the mother's stay in hospital as well. Your toddler will manage best if she can stay in her own home with the people she knows well.

When mum is in hospital – try and have as much contact with your toddler as possible. Even if your toddler cries when they have to leave it's better for them to know where you are. When your toddler visits you, try and give them your attention, ask them how they are, what they have been doing today, rather than nursing or breastfeeding the new baby.

You could also let your toddler have a photo of you to keep or maybe something special that you always wear like your favourite cardigan.

Sometimes a present from the baby to big brother or sister helps and your toddler might also like to choose a gift for the baby.

When baby comes home

- ⦿ Your toddler's behaviour will probably change – no matter how prepared they are.
- ⦿ Your toddler may go back to younger behaviour for a while, like wanting a bottle, wanting you to dress him, or going backwards in his toilet training. (Letting your toddler act younger for a while, without getting cross, will help him to feel better more quickly.)
- ⦿ Toddlers may get stressed or throw tantrums, especially when you are breastfeeding the new baby. Toddlers need to know that you understand these feelings. You could say: *'I know you feel cross when I am feeding the baby and you want to play. I would like to play with you too. I love playing with you. Can you find a book and we will read it together?'*
- ⦿ Arrange special activities that you keep for when you feed the baby, e.g. a doll that he can feed, a special video to watch, or tell him a story about what you did with him when he was a baby or read to him.
- ⦿ Read stories about new babies which show the older child feeling both happy and sad about the new baby.
- ⦿ Show your toddler how to touch the baby gently, but always be there to make sure the baby is safe.
- ⦿ Let your child know that hurting the baby is not allowed.
- ⦿ Make a special time for your toddler and if you can, get someone else to mind the baby and do something that your toddler enjoys.

A new baby arriving in the family brings big changes for everyone, particularly for any other children. The birth of a new baby is one of the most stressful times in a young child's life, especially if your other child is two or under. Your toddler still may not feel very secure and as you will have less time for him or her, they may feel less loved.