

Pregnancy

Toddlers

- Toddlers can understand more than they can express
- Talk about babies in general, help your child notice other babies. Use the words sister and brother.
- Read simple picture books about babies & becoming a sibling

Preschoolers

- Attend a sibling prep class
- Point out & discuss families with more than one child
- Read books about pregnancy, babies, siblings
- Link your due date to a season or holiday
- Don't make big changes, expect regression
- Let your child play with their old toys/things before giving them to the baby
- CHILDPROOF your home

School Age

- Older children may not feel as threatened, but may still resent the attention on baby
- Attend a sibling prep class
- Read books about birth (be anatomically correct), babies, and becoming a sibling
- Make changes to sleeping arrangements months in advance
- Talk about ways your child can help with the baby, and set ground rules for behavior

All Ages: Be sure to be the first person to tell your child you are pregnant.

- Visit a friend's baby to see what babies are like.
- Talk about and look at photos of your child's babyhood.
- Encourage your child to touch your belly when the baby moves or has hiccups.

Labor & Birth

If your child will attend your birth:

- Consider your child's temperament and maturity level.
- Choose a birth setting that is supportive.
- Arrange for someone (not a parent or a labor-support person) to care for your child.
- Prepare your child regarding what to expect. Watch videos, read books, brainstorm with your child what your child could do during the process.
- Avoid making promises about the birth you might not be able to keep.
- Discuss alternate arrangements for your child if things don't go according to plan.

If your child will not attend your birth:

- In the weeks prior to the birth, explain to your child that you will be leaving to go have the baby and describe who will care for your child, where they will be, and for how long.
- Ask your child to help pack their bag and the baby's bag.
- When labor begins, tell your child when you'll be leaving and where you are going. Prepare your child for the possibility that this could happen during the night, and they could wake up to you gone.
- Plan for your child to visit soon after the birth. If possible, have the partner hold the baby when your child arrives. Expect your child to react negatively (especially if a young child).
- Have a gift ready to give your child, from the baby.

The 4th Trimester

- Give your child a doll so he has a baby to care for, too. Prepare a special "breastfeeding box" with new toys and/or special snacks for your child while you are feeding the baby.
- Before the birth, shift most daily care activities to the partner (bath, bedtime story, etc.)
- Schedule time to be alone together and let your child decide what you will do.
- Continue enforcing behavior rules, while helping your child express all their feelings. Accept any negative reactions to this massive life change while helping your child find new, positive coping skills.
- If your child wants to avoid the baby, let her. If he wants to help, include him in age appropriate tasks.
- While your child is listening, talk about them to the baby. "Your big sister is going to show you the park today!" Praise your child in their hearing: "Grandmom, Vivian is such a big help with the baby!"

Adding A New Baby

Austin Area Resources:

- Babywearing International of Greater Austin: <http://www.bwiaustin.org/>
free meetings where trained experts will help you find and fit the right carrier for you. Lending library available for small cost.
- Central Texas Doula Association: <http://www.centxdoulas.org/>
list of doulas, both birth and postpartum. Many of the birth doulas also work as sibling doulas.
- Sibling Prep Classes (sibling usually must be at least 3 years old)
 - Hospital or Birthing Center sponsored
 - Caregiver sponsored
 - private, in-home class: <http://austinbabyguru.com/sibling-prep-class/>
- Austin Expecting: <http://austinexpecting.com/>
resource directory for all things prenatal, birth and postpartum

Booklist:

ages ~1-3

- *Snuggle the Baby* by Sara Gillingham
- *You're Getting a Baby Sister* by Sheila Sweeny Higginson
- *A New Chick for Chickies* by Janee Trasler
- *Best-Ever Big Sister or Best-Ever Big Brother* by Karen Katz
- *Waiting for Baby and My New Baby* by Rachel Fuller
- *The New Baby* by Mercer Mayer

ages ~2-5

- *The Big Sibling Book* a journal by Amy Krouse Rosenthal
- *Little Frog's Tadpole Trouble: Becoming a Big Brother is Hard* by Tatyana Feeney
- *Olive Marshmallow* by Katie Saunders
- *There's Going to Be a Baby* John Burroughs and Helen Oxenbury
- *Wolfie the Bunny* by Ame Dyckman
- *How to be a Baby by Me, the Big Sister* by Sally Lloyd-Jones and Sue Heap
- *I'm a Big Sister or I'm a Big Brother* by Joanna Cole
- *Waiting for Baby* by Harriet Ziefert
- *Hello Baby!* by Lizzy Rockwell

ages ~4-8

- *Once Upon a Baby Brother* by Sarah Sullivan
- *The Baby Tree* by Sophie Blackall
- *A Baby Sister* for Frances By Russell Hoban
- *Little Miss, Big Sis* by Amy Krouse Rosenthal
- *It's Not the Stork!: A Book About Girls, Boys, Babies, Bodies, Families and Friends* by Robie H. Harris