



Sibling Rivalry

It is natural and normal for an older child to respond to the birth of a new baby with feelings of jealousy, resentment, insecurity, anger and sadness. What is sometimes hard for parents to see or understand is the way in which these feelings make themselves known.

- One child may quite clearly try to physically hurt their baby brother, or say openly that they want him to go back
- Another child may be loving towards the new baby, but aggressive and hostile to her mother
- One might become very withdrawn, sucking the thumb and bedwetting
- Another may be fine at home but a cause for concern at school

Individual children have different difficulties with their new sibling:

- A child may accept the new baby with no apparent jealousy, but when the baby is nine months old and grabs their toys, feelings of resentment can surface
- Problems may arise when a younger child becomes sociable, makes their own friends and no longer needs their older sister or brother so much
- One child may seem to be more popular or successful at school than the other

Brothers and sisters may be very close during some periods, but there may be times throughout their lives when jealous feelings are very difficult for them

First Contact

and

Support Hub

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To find your nearest children's
centre call: **01429 284284**





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Some helpful practical tips:

- Try and avoid too many other life changes occurring at the same time as the new arrival. Moving house or starting at playgroup are best delayed if at all possible
- Take time to encourage and appreciate any helpful and loving gestures made towards the new baby, while ignoring negative and babyish behaviour as far as possible
- Find small, manageable tasks for your older child to do to encourage them to be involved. Don't push it if you get a negative response, but give praise for the help you do receive
- Try to arrange some special, baby-free time for you and your older child to have a quiet read or play on your own
- Be firm about negative behaviour without making your child feel guilty. Stress that it is what they are doing, not what they are that is unacceptable
- Beware of getting into the habit of thinking about 'good' and 'bad' behaviour and 'good' and 'bad' children within a family. Family myths can be hard to break.
- Watch out for signs of withdrawal or depression in your older child, and mention any concerns to school or nursery staff. A child who is finding their intense feelings about a new baby too difficult to share may bury them and need help in talking about them to someone outside the family.

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