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Suggestions for Preparing Older Children for Birth and for the Arrival of Your New Baby

During Pregnancy

- ♥ Begin at any time to discuss the upcoming birth and your new baby with your older child. Be prepared to answer lots of questions about conception, pregnancy, and birth. Remember to use appropriate terms such as ‘uterus’, instead of ‘tummy’.
- ♥ Read age-appropriate books to your child about birth and babies. We have a small collection in our office, please ask to borrow some if you like.
- ♥ Please bring your older child to as many of your prenatal visits as possible. We will involve your child in your check-up according to your child’s comfort level and interest.
- ♥ Invite your child to feel your abdomen when your baby moves. Discuss your baby’s fetal development with your child.
- ♥ Practice prenatal exercises with your child.
- ♥ Show your child pictures of him/herself as a newborn and infant. Tell your child stories of what it was like to parent him/her at such a young age.
- ♥ Have your child interact as much as possible with newborns.
- ♥ Have your child help you safety-proof your house, help to set up the baby swing, bassinet, and car seat.
- ♥ Begin working on sleeping arrangements now, especially if you plan on moving your older child out of your bed to make room for your new baby.

In Preparation for Childbirth

- ♥ Sibling Childbirth Education Classes are available through Great Starts Childbirth and Family Education. Please let us know if you would like class information. Classes often fill up quickly. You should sign your child up to attend by your 20th week of pregnancy.

- ♥ Please provide an adult friend for your child who can commit to being present and attentive to your child's needs throughout your labor.
- ♥ Give your child special jobs to do while you are in labor such as making a birthday cake for the baby, bringing you ice chips, offering you sips of water, and giving you backrubs, etc.
- ♥ Prepare your child for the sights, sounds, and smells of childbirth. Reassure him/her that labor is challenging, but that you will be o.k.
- ♥ Allow your child to announce the sex of his/her sibling, to cut the baby's umbilical cord, to make the birth announcement calls, and/or to help with your baby's first bath or diaper change.
- ♥ Allow your child to change his or her mind about attending the birth, even right up until the moment of birth!

Helping Your Child Adjust

After the birth of your baby, your older child may begin to want to snuggle more, may exhibit disruptions in sleep and eating patterns, may want to breastfeed or suck on a pacifier (even if they haven't done so for a while), or show some aggression towards you and/or the new baby. All of this is normal and to be expected. To help ease your child's transition into siblinghood, try the following:

- ♥ Plan for alone time with your older child. Naptime is often ideal.
- ♥ Read age-appropriate books to your child about being an older sibling/having a younger brother or sister.
- ♥ Have small, wrapped presents at hand to give to your child when visitors bring presents for the new baby.
- ♥ Let your child help with the new baby to the level of their ability and interest and never insist that your child help with the baby if he/she does not want to.
- ♥ Make sure that your older child has an activity to do while you breastfeed your baby, such as eating a snack, being read to, working on a puzzle, or talking to relatives on the telephone.