

JEALOUSY and SIBLING RIVALRY

Jealousy between brothers and sisters is normal. It is called sibling rivalry. Jealousy can start when there is a new baby in the family. It may last until children are in their teens.

A child who feels jealous will often...

- try to get attention
- want to be held and carried
- get into trouble on purpose
- not do what she is asked to do
- act like a baby. She may suck her thumb, wet her pants, want to wear diapers or want to drink from a bottle.
- try to hit the baby
- become quiet
- not want to have anything to do with the parents
- become upset and afraid



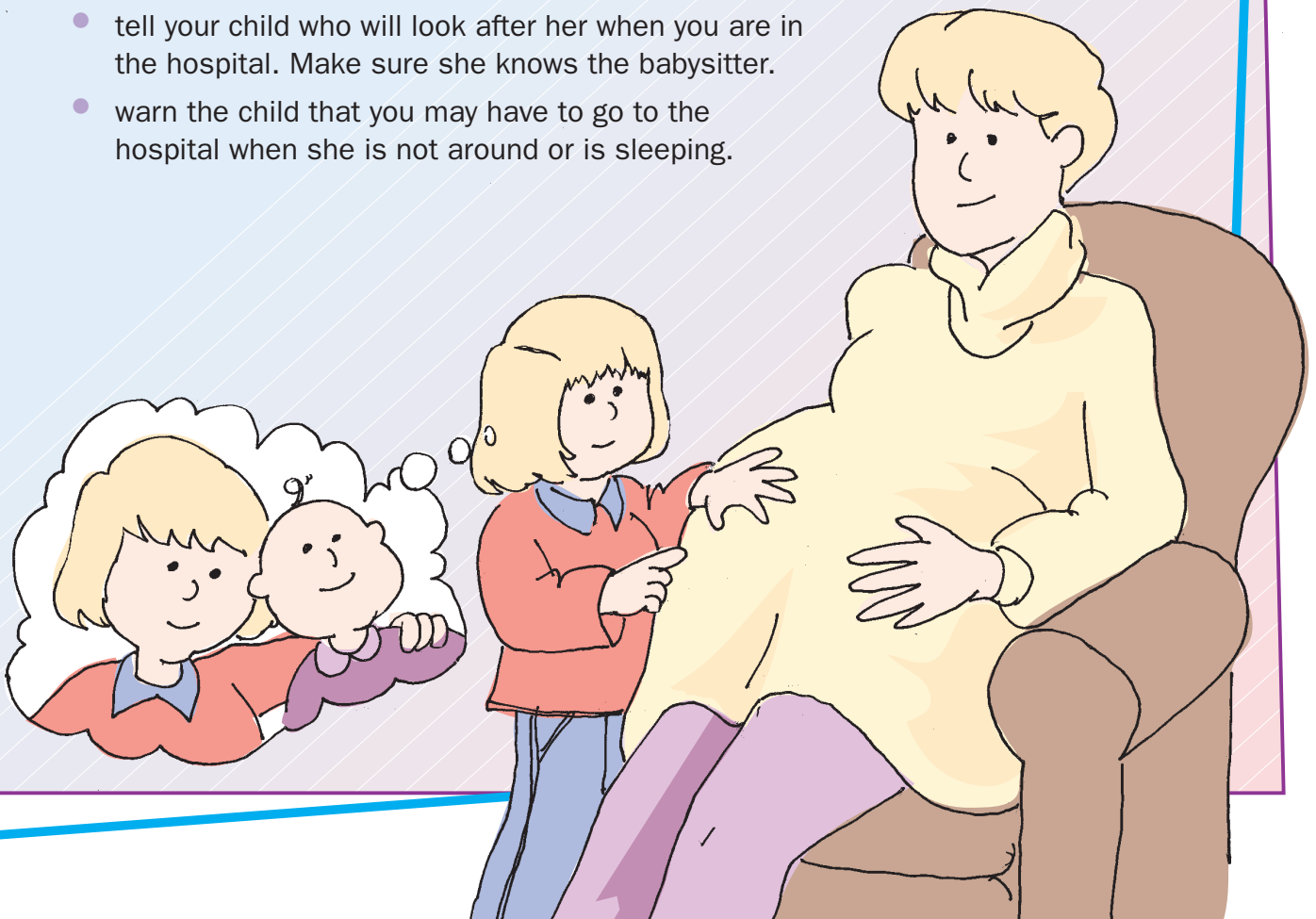
What to do if your child feels jealous

When you are pregnant...

- tell the child that there will be a new baby in the family
- tell the child what the baby will be like
- visit others with new babies
- move the child to her new room or bed (if this is needed) a few months before the baby arrives
- answer the child's questions about where the baby is. Let her feel and listen to mother's tummy.
- make the child feel grown-up. Tell her what she can do because she's older – sleep in a big bed, go to bed later and help mommy.
- tell her stories about when she was little
- let her look at her baby pictures
- let her help you get ready for the baby
- do not start toilet training when the child is jealous

A few days before the baby is expected...

- tell your child that you will be going to the hospital to have the baby.
- show the child where the hospital is.
- tell your child who will look after her when you are in the hospital. Make sure she knows the babysitter.
- warn the child that you may have to go to the hospital when she is not around or is sleeping.



While you are in the hospital...

- get someone to bring your child to visit you. If possible, phone your child.
- give your child extra attention before she meets the new baby.

Once you and the new baby are home...

- give your child extra attention while someone else looks after the baby
- let the child look at and touch the baby when she is ready
- don't force the baby on the older child
- never leave the child and baby alone together. The older child may accidentally hurt the baby.
- never let the child pick the baby up without your help
- make sure the baby doesn't get all the attention from visitors. The child will feel more important if you tell others what a "big help" she is.
- let the child help you care for the baby. She can get diapers, clothes and toys.
- let your child tell you how she feels about the baby
- let the child act like a baby if she wants to
- do things with the older child while the baby is sleeping.



Fighting between older children

Some fighting and arguing between children is normal.

To help children get along...

- remember that each child is different – do not try to treat all children the same.
- let children try to work things out by themselves. Do not take sides, blame or try to find out “who started it.”
- tell the children that you want them to stop arguing.
- suggest ways they can end the argument.
- break up the fight if someone is going to get hurt.
- praise each child for what she can do. It is unfair to compare children. For example, saying “I wish you would clean up your room like your brother” will lead to bad feelings.

**A few good things about sibling rivalry
It helps children...**

- learn how to handle disagreements
- learn to talk things out instead of fighting
- learn ways to handle anger and frustration
- learn how others feel

