



Early Learning Digest

Research-based information provided through a partnership between the Minnesota Department of Education and the Working Family Resource Center

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When Parents Learn Their Child has a Disability

It can be a tremendous blow for parents when they learn about any difficulty or problem in their child's development. Emotions such as denial, fear, guilt, disappointment and powerlessness may flood parents' minds and hearts when they receive bad news about their child.

Confusion is also common, and parents often feel that they have been thrown into a different culture. New words, acronyms, descriptions and programs must be learned while at the same time adjusting to the reality of difficult feelings.

One of the most helpful things parents can do is to accept that they don't need to navigate this challenge alone. Here are tips from parents of special needs children:

- Find another parent of a child with a disability to connect with, or join a group of parents.
- Seek accurate information, learn the terminology, and ask lots of questions.



- Figure out a support system, and include grandparents and other relatives.
- Accept and work through emotions in order to let go of negative feelings.
- Decide how to deal with the reactions of others to your child's differences.
- Keep daily routines as normal as possible.
- Remember that this is your child to love and enjoy. The child comes first; the disability comes second.
- Recognize that you are not alone on this unplanned journey!

Source: Parenting a Child with Special Needs, News Digest 20, National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities, 2003.

Dental Care for Your Baby

Dental problems can begin early in a child's life. Once a child's diet includes anything besides breast-milk, infants are at risk for decay. Start your child on a lifetime of good dental habits by following these guidelines:

- When your child begins to get his first tooth, check to see at what age your dentist would like to schedule your child's first dental appointment.
- Wean your child from the bottle at 12-14 months of age to prevent baby bottle tooth decay.
- Thumb sucking is common for infants, but thumb sucking after age 2 can create crooked teeth or bite problems. If the habit continues beyond age 3, a professional evaluation is recommended.
- Teeth Cleaning. Beginning at birth, clean your child's gums with a soft infant toothbrush or cloth and water.
- From six months to age 3, your child may have tender gums when new teeth are coming in. Many children like a clean teething ring, a cool spoon or cold wet washcloth, or simply rub the baby's gums with a clean finger.

Children with healthy teeth chew food easily and smile with confidence. Proper dental care will protect your child's smile now and in the future.

For more information on dental care for young children visit http://education.state.mn.us/ParentsKnow/acrossTheNet.jsf?ageGroup=age1_2 and follow link to <http://www.aapd.org/publications/brchures/baby-care.asp>

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talk to a professional and find out how you can get connected with various resources in Minnesota.

If you have concerns about your child's growth and development, please talk to your child's health care provider or call 1-866-693-GROW (4769), to

New Baby Sibling

It's important to prepare older children for the arrival of a new baby. Kids need to know what to expect, and they need time to adjust. It is not uncommon for older children to become aggressive, "act out," or even regress to acting like a baby. Here are some things you can do to help prepare your older child:

- If you plan to move your child to a new bed and/or bedroom, do so well before the baby arrives, so your child doesn't feel displaced by the baby. This goes for other major changes like weaning, toilet training, and starting preschool or daycare.
- Give him a realistic idea of what to expect when the baby arrives. You will be tired, and the baby will take lots of your time. The baby will not be a playmate at first.
- Read books about pregnancy, birth, newborns, and baby siblings with your child. Give her a chance to ask questions, voice concerns, and share feelings.
- Look at pictures or videos of your older child's birth and babyhood. Tell him how excited you were when he was born, and how everyone wanted to see him and hold him.
- Have your child practice holding a doll and supporting the head.



Teach her how to touch and hold a baby gently.

- Let your child participate in preparations in any way possible. Give him choices, such as choosing the baby's coming home outfit from two acceptable options.

There are many things that can contribute to a difficult adjustment including your child's personality, developmental stage, and stress on the family. However, with a few intentional efforts to prepare older children for the new baby, this can be a time of wonder and excitement for even the youngest members of your family!

Next Issue Part 2: Helping Your Child Adjust to the New Baby Once It Arrives

Source: "New Baby Sibling: Helping Your Older Child (or Children) Adjust," University of Michigan Health System, 2011.



Trusted parenting information, resources and activities to help your children grow, develop and learn from birth through high school at www.MNParentsKnow.info.

Test Your Knowledge of

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T F Help Me Grow is a program that provides developmental support and instruction for young children in MN with disabilities or delays in their development.

T F A parent who has concerns about their child's growth and development should wait until age three before asking to have the child evaluated.

T F If a child becomes eligible for Help Me Grow, parents are an important part of the service team.

T F Parents in any US state can find information about support for a child with disabilities at www.nectac.org.

For more information on Help Me Grow visit http://www.parentsknow.state.mn.us/parentsknow/Newborn/HelpMeGrow_SpecialNeeds/ReferChild/index.html



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Answers: 1) T, 2) F, 3) T, 4) T