

A photograph of a family of three. A man with short brown hair, wearing a dark red sweater, is on the left, kissing a young child on the cheek. The child has blonde hair and is wearing a yellow sweater and blue jeans. A woman with long dark hair, wearing an orange knit sweater, is on the right, also kissing the child on the cheek. The family is huddled together in a warm embrace against a plain grey background.

# TIPS of the Month

**MAY 2023**

**FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS:**  
Arrival of the Second Child  
(drafted by Annie Leclerc S.W)



**Military Family  
Resource Centre**  
Montreal Region

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Clara and Greg are the proud parents of Jacob, who is four years old. Clara just found out that she is pregnant again. The couple is thrilled about the news, as they've always wanted to have two children. However, Clara is anxious when she begins to think about when the baby comes. How will Jacob react? Are they ready? Have they thought of everything? Will they make ends meet ?

## Background

The arrival of a second child brings significant change. A number of questions arise: Do we have enough space at home or do we need to move? Is the car big enough or do we need to buy another one? Do we need to buy another baby seat? Will the new baby be able to wear the first one's old clothes? Will we be able to adjust our routine? And, especially, how will our child react when the baby comes?

## Helpful resources

MFRC/CRFM: Your Military Family Resource Centre (MFRC) offers a number of services: appointments with specialized educators and social workers as well as drop-in daycare, child-youth and referral services, to name but a few.

SISIP and Support Our Troops / Appuyons nos troupes: A number of financial services: appointments to draw up a budget, several loans and subsidies available.

## How to prepare the first child

The first child may be upset by the arrival of a potential rival who they feel could take their place.

To minimize feelings of jealousy or regression in order to get the parents' attention, it is recommended that the first child be properly prepared for when the baby comes.

- Announce the pregnancy and make connections with the first child. For example, explain to them that they too were once in mommy's belly, like their brother or sister is now.
- Show them their baby book to create a shared connection with the coming baby (fraternal bond).
- In keeping with your child's age, talk to them about their new role. They may be "the big boy who will help mommy." They may even be put in charge of choosing toys or a blankie for their brother or sister. Another idea would be to have them choose a baby book for their sibling. You can also ask them to help you get the baby's room ready.

## When baby arrives

- Make sure the first child keeps to the same routine so as not to destabilize them.
- If your first child is still young, they will need care and attention. Ask your spouse, family, relatives, neighbour and friends for help.
- Try to take care of your baby by staying as close as possible to your first child, who will feel reassured when they draw or play by your side, for example.
- Give them attention: a wink, a smile, a hug. Tell them often that you love them as much as before and as much as you love the new baby. This will help them understand that the baby has not taken their place.
- Ask them to help. Ask them to bring you a diaper or a towel. Depending on their age, have them hold the baby's bottle (with supervision). Let them kiss the baby. Build a bond between them by having them speak gently to the baby.



DID YOU  
KNOW  
THAT...

- A child who expresses jealousy and/or aggressive behaviour towards a baby is trying to convey suffering and/or an emotion. They may need to be reassured as to their parents' love. They may also need their parents to recognize that they're angry. If that's the case, you need to intervene quickly to make the child understand that you acknowledge their emotions, that they're allowed to feel that way, but that under no circumstances are they to take it out on the baby.
- Some children regress when a baby arrives. They'll ask for a bottle, to breastfeed, will wet the bed, and so on. "These reactions are the sign of sound emotional health!" according to Myriam Szejer, a child psychiatrist. If the behaviour persists, however, there is cause for concern. When parents give the child proper attention and quality time, the child is reassured as to their place in the family. They should thus stop this regressive behaviour.



### Bibliography

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### Need help?

Contact Psychosocial Intake at the Military Family Resource Centre, Montreal Region:

Saint-Hubert: 450-462-8777, Ext. 6821 and Saint-Jean: 450-358-7099, Ext. 2917 or [SvcPersCRFMSoutienPsySt-Jean@forces.gc.ca](mailto:SvcPersCRFMSoutienPsySt-Jean@forces.gc.ca)