

# Sibling support teens

## Ages 13 years to 18 years

Regardless of their age, siblings of children with a life-changing injury or chronic health condition will also need your support and understanding.

### What siblings need

Siblings need you to:

- Recognize and accept their emotions.
- Provide information about their sibling's diagnosis, or injury.
- Create a stable home environment with routines and boundaries.



As siblings grow their needs and the type of support they require will change.

### Cook Children's Sib2Sib Program™

This program offers siblings the opportunity to:

- Recognize their unique qualities and gifts.
- Have fun outside of their daily routines.
- Be supported by encouraging adults.
- Express their feelings about having chronically ill brothers or sisters.
- Build relationships with other siblings going through similar situations.

## The Sibling Support Project

This is a resource for siblings of all ages.

<https://siblingsupport.org> or



## To request support for siblings

Send us a note at:

[sibprogram@cookchildrens.org](mailto:sibprogram@cookchildrens.org) or ask to speak with a child life specialist.

You can request individual time for you or the brothers and sisters to meet with a child life specialist about specific sibling concerns or needs. If you are away from the hospital, we would be happy to talk with you over the phone.

Ask a member of your child's medical team to connect you with a child life specialist or call the Child Life department at 682-885-4048.

## Books for siblings

"Just Because" by Rebecca Elliott. Ages 3 years or older.

"Sometimes" by Rebecca Elliott. Ages 5 years to 7 years.

“Hi, My Name is Jack” by Christina Beall-Sullivan”. Ages 3 years to 12 years.

“Views from Our Shoes: Growing Up with a Brother or Sister with Special Needs”. By Donald Joseph Meyer ... Ages 9 to 12 years.

“The Sibling Slam Book: What It's Really Like To Have A Brother Or Sister With Special Needs” by Don Meyer. For Tweens and Teens

## Common behaviors, feelings, and reactions

	Common feelings and reactions	How you can help
<b>Information</b>  <b>Questions about the future</b>	<p>At this age, teens are able to understand more about their sibling’s diagnosis. They may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be thinking about the reasons for the diagnosis.</li> <li>• Be interested in learning more about their sibling’s diagnosis and care.</li> <li>• Have overheard conversations about their sibling.</li> <li>• Try looking for information on their own.</li> </ul> <p>Teens may be thinking about the future, both for their sibling and their own future.</p> <p>They are starting to think about what things will look like when they are an adult.</p>	<p>If teens would like to learn, provide concrete explanations to help them understand their sibling’s diagnosis and care. Start with simple information and then give more details if teens would like to learn more.</p> <p>Encourage teens to come to you or another trusted adult if they have questions about their sibling and diagnosis rather than searching for answers on the internet.</p> <p>Proactively find opportunities for casual check-in’s with teens about questions they may have and how they are doing. Look for a time when conversations could happen naturally to check-in.</p> <p>Use this as a time also to learn what teens are thinking about the future.</p>
<b>Responsibility</b>	<p>Helping at home is a good thing for teens but they are not ready to take on adult responsibilities yet.</p>	<p>Offer teens an age-appropriate way to help with their sibling.</p>
<b>Social interactions</b>	<p>Classmates and others may have questions for teens about their sibling. Teens may not know how to best respond to these questions.</p> <p>Teens may feel embarrassed about their sibling.</p>	<p>Help teens come up with ways to respond to questions from others.</p> <p>Help them find possible solutions for things that are embarrassing for them.</p>
<b>Peers</b>	<p>Friendships with peers are an important part of a teen’s life. Having opportunities to develop those friendships is important.</p>	<p>Help teens find ways to spend time with peers.</p>
<b>Mixed feelings</b>	<p>Teens may feel lots of different emotions such as jealousy, worry, anger, and guilt.. They are also managing all of the other emotions that go along with being a teenager.</p>	<p>Acknowledge all of the different emotions they may have and things that contribute to those feelings.</p> <p>Support teens in finding healthy ways to cope with these emotions.</p>

## Things teens want parents to know

## **We have problems and worries too so please check in with us.**

- It's not always easy to keep up our grades so try and be gentle with us.
- Be aware of our emotions.
- Don't compare me to my siblings.
- Sometimes it can be hard when you share your worries and fears about our sibling with us. But we want the truth.

## **Let us know we're not alone, that you're here to help.**

- Crying together is okay. It's hard to see, but it has a certain time and place.
- Make time for private conversations; the car is a great place for these.
- Tell us how we can help.
- I want to help, but I can't take the full load. I can't be the parent.

## **Tell us what's going on with our sibling, especially if something changes.**

- Don't hide it. We're willing to understand.

## **If something happens**

- Hear both sides of what's happened.
- Don't assume it's my fault or that my sib is blameless.

## **Give my sib responsibilities too**

- Make plans for my sib's future and talk to me about these plans.
- Help them prepare to be as independent as possible.

## **Child Life**

For contacts and locations visit: [cookchildrens.org/patients-families/healthcare-team/child-life-specialists/](https://cookchildrens.org/patients-families/healthcare-team/child-life-specialists/) or



These instructions are only general guidelines. Your healthcare provider may give you special instructions. If you have questions or concerns, please call your healthcare provider.