

Having your baby in the Cardiac Intensive Care Unit (CICU) can be difficult for any family. It can be especially challenging when you have other young children at home who need attention. One of the best things you can do to support other young children at home is to offer consistent and clear information by answering their questions in a way that is helpful and age-appropriate. Here are some ways you can help answer older siblings' questions.

Quick Facts

1. "There is nothing you did to cause this. Sometimes babies are born with a sick heart. It is no one's fault."
2. "Your baby is in a special place in the hospital called the Cardiac Intensive Care Unit. Some adults call it the CICU. This is a place where they take care of babies who need extra help with their heart."
3. "Everything that they are doing for your baby is to help your baby and not to hurt them. We are doing everything we can to get your baby better so it can come home to you."

General Tips & Suggestions

- Provide simple and honest answers, using language they understand.
- Allow and encourage siblings to ask questions. Follow their lead.
- Use repetition and ask open-ended questions.
- Remember that for younger children, a baby they cannot see is difficult to imagine. Showing them a picture of the baby can help them see the baby as a real person. Even with the tubes and machines, a sibling only wants to see that their new baby has arrived and is somewhere safe.
- Use "play" to help the siblings understand the hospital experience.
- Assure them that all feelings are normal, and let them see you feel too.

Please ask your nurse to contact your child's Child Life Specialist to assist with a bedside sibling visit. It is important that children are appropriately prepared before they visit the CICU.