

Are You Ready for Another Child?

After your first child was born, you learned to sing “Rock a Bye Baby” and recite the entire book *Good Night Moon* from memory. You stayed up countless nights and changed more diapers than you care to count. Are you ready to go through it all again? For some parents the answer is a resounding “yes.” But for others, that question may be a bit tougher to answer. Here are a few things to consider when deciding to add to your family.

Spacing between pregnancies

Parents with children who are close in age enjoy having them play together and be interested in the same activities. As an added plus, parents get all their childrearing done in the shortest time. Alternatively, parents may want to space children further apart so each child gets more one-on-one parent time. From a research perspective, according to recent studies published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, women who became pregnant less than 18 months or more than five years since their last pregnancy had a higher chance of giving birth prematurely.

Preparing for a new sibling

An ideal time to bring home a new baby is when the first child is under age one or over four. Most babies less than a year old are not aware they have their parents’ undivided attention so they are less likely to take exception to a new sibling. Children over the age of four have already enjoyed being the center of their parents’ attention and usually are beginning to have a life of their own by going to school and making new friends.

Planning financially

Being able to afford another child can be the deal-breaker for some parents since raising a child to the age of 18 costs approximately \$190,000. The U.S. Department of Agriculture reports that average middle class parents spend \$24,000 during the first two years of life for each additional child (\$32,000 for the first child). If the amount of lost wages for a stay-at-home parent and college costs are figured in, that little bundle of joy could cost more than \$1.6 million by the time he or she reaches adulthood.

Getting older

Age matters, especially for women. One in five women today who gives birth is over 35. Most have uneventful pregnancies and healthy babies, but compared to younger women they may have a harder time getting pregnant and run a higher risk of having a baby with certain birth defects. Their risk of miscarriage is higher, they are more likely to have Cesarean delivery and they run a higher chance of developing complications during pregnancy, such as gestational diabetes, placental problems or premature birth.

It is important that both parents agree on having another child. Whether you are thinking about having your second (or sixth) baby, caring for a newborn brings added

responsibility and, yes, the return to sleepless nights. In the end, the decision is yours. It is one that cannot be determined by dollar signs or diapers, but in the intangible rewards of parenthood.