



Pets and Your New Baby

Pet owners want to help prepare their pets for the arrival of the new baby. We encourage you to plan ahead and offer these tips.

During Your Pregnancy

- Do not change the cat's litter box. You may be exposed to toxoplasmosis. Have someone else clean the litter box every day.
- All pets need regular check ups with a veterinarian. Be sure all shots are up to date.
- If you have a dog and have not enrolled in an obedience class, sign up for one early in your pregnancy.
- If you are concerned your dog may misbehave when you have a new baby, use a muzzle or leash throughout your pregnancy so your dog is used to them if you need to use them after your baby is born.
- Let your pet rest on your lap (if your pet can fit) to feel the baby growing in your uterus.
- Practice having your dog sit and stay while you wrap a doll in a blanket and pretend to change the doll's diapers. Reward good behavior.
- Make a recording of a crying baby. Play it while talking calmly to your pet. You can also do this after your baby is born but before you bring your baby home.

After the Birth but Before Bringing Your Baby Home

- Have someone take a blanket that has been scented by your baby home to your pet to smell.

How to Introduce Your Baby to Your Dog

- Feed the dog before bringing the baby into your home.
- Talk calmly; reward your dog for good behavior.
- Greet your dog while you are not holding the baby.
- Wait until your dog is settled down before bringing in your baby.
- Do not force the dog to meet the baby.
- If your dog is not calm, keep your pet and your baby separate from each other.
- Sit down if holding your baby (your dog will feel less threatened).
- Slowly bring your dog to the baby.
- Reward good behavior.
- Avoid harsh punishments.
- It may take days for your dog to adjust to your baby.
- Do not leave your baby and your pet together unsupervised. Use a door, a gate or a monitor, if needed.
- If ignored too long, your pet may act naughty. Give your pet extra attention.
- Dogs may try to get into dirty diapers so use diaper pails or waste bins.
- When your child crawls and walks, your dog may feel threatened. Be careful.
- You may need to use a muzzle or leash.

How to Introduce Your Baby to Your Cat

- Do not force the cat to meet the baby.
- Sit with your baby and allow your cat to inspect your baby.
- Some cats may not want to meet your baby right away, some may wait.
- Cats like to be warm; will often want to be close to a baby.
- Put a screen or netting over the crib to keep your cat away, if needed.
- If you use a screen, once your baby can reach the screen you will need to remove it.
- Some cats scratch or urinate on baby's items.
- When your baby is crawling and walking, keep the litter box out of reach.
- Do not leave your baby and your pet together unsupervised. Use a door, a gate or a monitor, if needed.
- If ignored too long, your pet may act naughty. Give your pet extra attention.

Ask your veterinarian for tips about introducing other types of pets to your new baby.

Also visit the Humane Society Web site, www.hsus.org and type in “pets and babies.”

Adapted from an article by Cathi Edler, RN, published in *American Baby* magazine, March 1994.

