

YOUR PET AND YOUR NEW BABY

How Can I Prepare My Pet?

The addition of a new family member may be difficult for your pet no matter how much you have prepared. Your dog or cat is used to being the center of your attention as your first baby. It's possible that they might feel a little sibling rivalry when a new member of the family arrives.

To reduce feelings of sibling rivalry, try slowly spending less time with your pet before bringing home your baby who will demand much more of your time. Frequently scolding or isolating your pet after the baby comes home will most likely make your pet feel stressed. Make sure that another family member develops a closer relationship with your pet so your pet can still feel loved and provided for while mom is busy with the baby.

- Make sure your pet has had a routine health exam and current vaccinations.
- Get your pet used to nail trims.
- Spay or neuter your pet. Spayed and neutered pets typically have fewer health problems and can also be calmer.
- Consider enrolling in a training class with your dog to address training and behavior issues.
- Work on any pet training and behavior issues.
- Play recordings of a baby crying, turn on the infant swing, and use your rocking chair. Offering your pet a treat and praise to make these positive experiences.
- If the baby's room will be off-limits to your pet, install a sturdy barrier such as a removable gate or even a screen door. These types of barriers will let your pet to see and hear what's happening, making them less isolated from the family and more comfortable with the new baby noises.
- Get your pet familiar with the smell of baby powder/oil by using them on your before baby comes home.
- Don't forget to plan ahead and make sure your pet gets proper care while you're at the birthing center.

Can I Keep My Cat?

If you're pregnant, you have most likely heard of toxoplasmosis because it can cause serious birth defects. Toxoplasmosis is a rare disease here in the United States and can easily be avoided. The parasite which causes the disease can be found in the feces of cats who have eaten raw meat, birds, mice, or contaminated soil. However, it is more commonly found in uncooked or undercooked meat. If you're concerned about a possible exposure, your obstetrician can perform a blood test. If the result shows you were exposed to toxoplasmosis during pregnancy, you may be given medication and your baby may be tested and treated soon after birth.

The odds of contracting toxoplasmosis during pregnancy are extremely low, and even lower for your baby. You do not have to give up living with and caring for your cat because you are pregnant. Toxoplasmosis is easily avoided with good hygiene and responsible pet care. Simply follow these easy steps to reduce the risk:

- Avoid handling or eating uncooked meat.
- Be certain to wash all cutting boards and utensils that may have come in contact with meat before using them to prepare other foods.
- Keep your cat safely indoors and away from wildlife.
- Have someone else clean the litter box daily. If you must do it, wear a mask and rubber gloves.
- Feed cats only commercially prepared cat food.

What Do We Do After Baby Is Born?

Have your partner or friend take home something with the baby's scent (such as a blanket) for your pet to investigate before bringing your baby home. Your pet will be eager to greet you and have your attention when you arrive home. Have someone else take the baby into another room while you calmly give your pet a warm welcome.

After greeting, bring your pet with you to sit next to the baby; remember to reward your pet with treats for good behavior. You want your pet associate the baby as a positive experience. Never force your pet near the baby, and always supervise any interaction.

Life will be hectic at first caring for your new baby, try to maintain regular routines to help your pet adjust. Be sure to spend quality alone time with your pet each day. Be consistent in training, supervision, and adjustments, you, new baby, and your pet should be able to live together safely and happily.

For more information on introducing your dog to baby, go to:

<https://positively.com/dog-behavior/new-dogs/introducing-a-new-dog/introducing-dog-to-new-baby/>