

YOUR PET AND YOUR NEW BABY

You do not need to give up your pet



At the shelter, we often see people abandon their pets when a new baby arrives. Babies and pets can get along quite well. Remember that by owning a pet, you have made a commitment to her. It is only fair that you make significant efforts to keep your pet in the home she knows and loves. Here are some tips for introducing your newborn to the family pet:

Before baby's arrival:

- Take your pet to the veterinarian for a routine health exam and necessary vaccination.
- Spay or neuter your pet. Sterilized animals are traditionally calmer and less likely to bite. Also, they have fewer health problems associated with their reproductive system.
- Consult with your vet and pediatrician. By working with these experts before your baby is born, you can resolve problems early and ease your mind.
- Trim your pet's nails regularly.
- Consider enrolling your dog in an obedience training class.
- Ask friends with infants to visit your home to accustom your pet to babies. Remember to supervise all pet and infant interactions.
- Familiarize your pet with baby-related noises. Play recordings of a baby crying or turn on the mechanical infant swing. Make these positive experiences for your pet by offering a treat or playtime.
- Apply double-stick tape to the furniture to discourage your pet from jumping on the baby's crib and changing table.
- Block the entrance to the baby's room with a removable gate high enough to keep your pet from jumping over it. By doing this, you will teach your pet that the baby's room is off limits.
- Talk to your pet about the baby, using the baby's name regularly if you've selected one.
- Sprinkle baby powder or baby oil on your skin so your pet becomes familiar with these new smells.
- Plan ahead and make sure your pet is cared for properly while you're at the birthing center. Call a friend, neighbor or relative months in advance to set up arrangements.
- Carry around a swaddled baby doll to help your pet get used to the real thing.

When baby comes home:

- Before you leave the hospital, find something with the baby's scent on it (such as a blanket) and send it home for your pet to sniff. By getting to know the newborn's scent, your pet will be better prepared for baby's homecoming.
- Have someone else carry the baby into your home so you can properly greet your excited pet. That way, your pet won't

think he is being neglected in favor of the new arrival.

- Encourage your pet to sit calmly with you next to the baby. Reward your pet with treats for appropriate behavior.
- Never force your pet near the baby, and always supervise any interaction. If the first introduction does not go well, don't force it. Wait a while, then try again.
- Shower your pet with affection. Schedule at least 5 to 10 minutes a day to pet, groom and play with your pet. Animals live by routines and can become upset or irritable if their schedules changes dramatically, so be sure to give them proper attention and care.
- Refrain from giving your pet toys that resemble baby toys. Your pet may become confused and anxious if it sees the baby playing with a familiar toy.
- Use strong verbal commands to teach your pet that it is not OK to nip, growl or hiss at the baby.
- Do not let your pet sleep in the same room as the baby. A pet can inadvertently smother an unattended infant.



All adjustments take time

Caring for a new baby can be hectic, but try to maintain regular routines to help your pet adjust. Spending some one-on-one quality time with your pet – even if it's only for five minutes – will make the transition easier and, no doubt, help relax you, too. Remember, try to always keep interaction between baby and pet positive, and reward your pet for good behavior. With proper training, supervision and adjustments, you, your new baby and your pet should be able to live together safely as one big happy family.