

Introducing Your Dog to a New Baby

Basic Canine Education



CARE SHEET

Developed with and approved by a Qualified Veterinarian

As a new parent you're probably concerned about how your dog is going to react to your new baby. Many people surrender their pets to animal shelters because of exhibited jealousy from their dog after a new baby's arrival. Yet many families have been successful in introducing their dogs to the new baby. Here are some tips for preparing your dog for the arrival of a new baby.

Preparing your Dog Preparing your dog for the baby's arrival in advance is one of the best ways to help avoid friction and jealousy between your baby and your dog. Your dog is used to your attention and pampering, some jealousy will naturally surface when your new baby becomes the center of attention. Taking some precautions, a few minutes of quality time and some extra treats can go a long way!

Before Bringing Home your Baby Take your pet to the vet for a complete checkup a few months before the baby arrives. Worms and parasites can be harmful to your baby. If your dog is not spayed or neutered, this is also the time to get it done.

Dogs are creatures of habit; try to keep their routine as normal as possible. If you anticipate changes start early in adjusting your dog to the new sleeping and play areas and feeding and walking schedules that may occur after the arrival of the baby. It is best not to make too many changes all at once.

Allow your dog to explore the baby's sleeping, diaper changing areas, and related items such as baby powder, lotions, and diapers to become familiar with the new smells and objects. Apply baby lotion or powder to your hands, for example, and allow your dog to sniff the new smell. Dogs rely on their sense of smell, so familiarity with the new baby smells will help her recognize the baby as a part of the family. If possible, allow your dog to smell clothing that your baby has used before you bring the baby home.

Do not allow your dog to sleep on the baby's furniture or play with the baby's toys. Your dog should know that the furniture is not for her and should treat it as such. Provide toys for the dog that do not resemble baby toys. A dog may take the toy from the baby's hand and unintentionally injure the infant.

Expose your dog to small children and watch how she reacts and try to identify any potential problems.

Introducing Your Dog to Your Baby When the baby comes home, another person should hold the baby while you greet your dog. Your dog has missed you and it is important to pay attention to her when you first get home. Greet your dog happily and tell her how much you've missed her. Bring your dog a new toy as a gift to associate the baby with something positive. After your dog's excitement about your homecoming has dissipated you should start introducing your baby to the dog.

If you are unsure of your dog's behavior, leash or restrain her during the introduction. Talk to your dog, pet her and encourage her to get a good look and sniff the baby's hands and feet. Do not force a reluctant dog by pushing the infant in front of the pet. Allow the pet to explore the new smells at her own pace. Never leave your baby unsupervised with your pet. The actions of a baby may scare your dog and cause her to bite in self-defense.

If your dog reacts aggressively, put her in another room until she is calm and try the introduction again.

Never leave your dog alone with your baby. An infant is incapable of pushing the animal away and your dog may inadvertently smother the child.

Note: The information on this Care Sheet is not a substitute for veterinary care. If you need additional information, please refer to the above sources or contact your veterinarian as appropriate.