



A NEW BABY AND THE FAMILY DOG

Preparing your pet for the new arrival

Begin to prepare your dog as soon as you are aware that there is going to be a new baby in the house. The more time you spend on training your dog and helping him to adjust to the changes that are coming, the easier the whole process will be.

- Let your midwife know that you have a dog and discuss this leaflet as part of your preparation.
- Do not leave this preparation until the new baby arrives, as it is important that your dog associates the new baby with as few disruptions and changes to his routine as possible.

Things to do in the months leading up to the baby's arrival

- Make sure that your dog has a basic understanding of good behaviour. Brush up on his training so that he will lie quietly for short periods, so that he won't jump up, can walk on the lead without pulling and come when called. This will make both your lives much easier.
- If your dog has any behaviour problems, make sure that these are solved before your baby arrives. Ask your vet to refer you to a good local animal behaviourist.
- Make sure that your dog is healthy and is up to date with his worming tablets and vaccinations.
- If your dog is an 'only' pet, it is quite likely that he is used to being the 'baby' in your family. Help him get used to being less important, by ignoring him and leaving him alone for short periods of time every day.
- If you are planning to keep your dog out of certain rooms or areas of the house after the baby arrives, then start doing this as soon as possible. Ideally, he should not be allowed in the baby's bedroom.
- Teach your dog to walk gently next to the pram.
- Bring new items of furniture such as playpens, carry cots and highchairs into the house, so that your dog can get used to them.
- Try to teach your dog the difference between his toys and those that will belong to the baby.
- Try to get a tape recording of baby noises and play it in areas that the baby is going to be most often, so that your dog can get used to these 'strange' sounds.
- Develop a routine that you intend to follow when the new baby arrives and stick to it, to help your dog cope with the changes in the home.

When the baby has arrived

- Try not to make a big deal with your dog about the arrival of the new baby. Teach him how to approach the baby properly and gently. Allow the dog to make safe initial investigations and approaches.
- Help your dog to see the baby as a nice thing to be around. Give your dog treats and lots of praise when he behaves well around the baby.
- Do not place the baby on the floor with your dog and never hit or shout at him for approaching the baby in the wrong way. Gently, show the dog what you wish him to do and reward him when he gets it right.

- Make sure that your dog has enough exercise and things to do – a bored dog with too much energy can get up to all sorts of mischief while you are busy with your new baby.
- If you have any worries about your dog's behaviour after the baby has arrived, consult your vet as soon as possible, who will refer you to a good local animal behaviourist.

Remember, NEVER leave any baby or child alone with any dog – no matter how trustworthy you think they are.

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