

PREPARING FOR A KIDDO...

when you have a doggo



If you're wondering if you can be a mom to dogs and kids, the answer is yes. Here are answers to some questions you may have as a pregnant or new mom that will help you, baby and pup safely coexist.



PREPARING FOR BABY: I'm pregnant. Should I be concerned that my dog will make me sick?

Dogs can carry intestinal parasites that can infect humans, such as hookworms and roundworms, which is why it's important to have your dog regularly dewormed by your veterinarian. It's also important that you keep your dog up to date on rabies vaccinations.

What behavior issues should I try to fix now?

Dogs may become anxious around a pregnant woman, or they may not react at all. Anxious dogs can be naughty and chew things up. They can also urinate or defecate in the house due to anxiety over changes in their lives. These are behaviors you want to curb or correct ASAP. If you haven't taken your dog through obedience training, then now is a perfect time to learn new behaviors, reinforce good behaviors and stop bad behaviors.

If your dog needs obedience training, having the right person help your dog makes a difference. Consult with either a certified applied animal behaviorist (CAAB or ACAAB certification), a board-certified veterinary behaviorist (DACVB certification) or a certified professional dog trainer (CCPD-KA certification).

If my dog likes other people's kids, can I assume it will like mine?

Generally speaking, if your dog enjoys being around children, he or she should get along just fine with your kids. However, a baby is not the same as an older child. Babies and even toddlers move in strange, jerky ways and make loud noises that dogs aren't used to. Ensure safety by supervising every interaction your dog has with your baby. As your child grows, you can teach him or her how to safely and humanely interact with your pet.



Would it be wise to get a second dog so my dog feels less ignored when the baby comes?

If your dog is highly social, it might be a good idea to get a companion for your dog. However, there's no guarantee that the two dogs will like each other, and remember that two dogs equal twice the care, feeding and cleaning. Sometimes it turns out to be more work.

Try to imagine what your life will be like with the baby and two dogs—is it a scenario you think you could handle (and enjoy)? Consider getting through the pregnancy first and see what life looks like with one dog and a baby before adding a second dog. Another option that's far less permanent: Take your dog to doggie daycare.

We already have one child and everything's fine. Is there any reason I should be concerned about my dog reacting badly to a second baby?

It depends on the age of your current child and the temperament of your dog, but generally speaking, your dog should adapt. Some dogs are fine with elementary-school-age children and weird around babies and toddlers, so it's important to always supervise children when they're around your dog. If you

observe any abnormal behavior, ask your veterinarian to refer you to a veterinary behavior specialist.

Should I start paying less attention to my dog while I'm pregnant? How do I do this?

You don't *have* to start paying less attention to your dog, but if you do, slowly start limiting your interaction over time so the dog is less likely to notice the difference. (The physical demands of pregnancy may cause this to occur naturally.) If you're concerned that your dog might get bored or lonely, consider signing him up for doggie daycare a few times a week.



What can I do to start getting my dog used to a baby? Should I allow my dog to roam the nursery?

If your dog has never been exposed to a baby before, it's a good idea to get him used to some of the sights, smells and sounds associated with babies before you bring your little one home.

The best thing you can do is build a positive association in your dog's brain between all things baby and something that your dog likes, such as treats, toys or praise. Dogs learn a lot about their environment through their noses, so as soon

as you start bringing home baby equipment, you can help desensitize your dog to these new items by letting him sniff the baby supplies and pairing the sniffing with treats, toys or praise. Playing the sound of crying babies on your phone is also a good way to get your dog (and yourself!) used to the new sound, and don't forget to pair the sound with a treat.

One of the hardest things to prepare for is how the baby will alter everyone's schedule. Varying your pet's feeding and exercise times is a good way to help your pet be more flexible when the baby arrives. If you don't have one already, installing a doggie door so your pet can relieve itself on its own schedule can be helpful.

Generally speaking, it's better to avoid letting your dog roam free in the nursery because it's not *his* area. If you're thinking about using any baby equipment that's at floor level, such as an activity mat, it's a good idea to start training your dog to stay off the activity mat and even to stay on his own bed when the activity mat or other floor-level equipment comes out.





BRINGING BABY HOME: Is it best to introduce the dog and the baby inside of the home or out?

Because dogs are naturally territorial of their own space, it's best to have the baby and the dog meet on neutral territory—perhaps in front of a neighbor's house or in a nearby park. If this isn't possible, try bringing the baby into the home while the dog is outside and then bringing the dog back into the house to meet the baby.

After bringing the baby home, should I let my dog lick the baby's face? Cuddle with the baby? Can I leave the baby on the floor with the dog while I take a bathroom break?

There isn't a lot of research in this area, but generally speaking, veterinarians and pediatricians

discourage letting your pet lick or cuddle your infant. (Remember the intestinal parasites mentioned in question No. 1?)

As for leaving the baby on the floor, no matter how well-behaved you think your dog is, never leave babies or young children unattended in a room with a dog.

If my dog growls at the baby or shows any other signs of aggression, do I need to get rid of him?

You do not have to immediately rehome the dog, but you will have to closely manage him to keep your child safe. Dogs can be trained to get along with children; however, if your dog shows any signs of fear or aggression (tucked tail, growling, barking, stiffening, etc.) around the baby, have your veterinarian help you find a veterinary behavior specialist ASAP so you can schedule a home visit. Keep the baby and the

dog separate until you can get some professional help.

How do I keep my dog from feeling ignored— and myself from feeling guilty—after I bring the baby home?

One easy way is to take the dog and the baby out for walks at the same time—everybody is getting fresh air! This is especially helpful if your dog has a lot of energy. You can also invest in doggie daycare a few times a week, various food puzzles or a dog walker.

And take heart, new mom: If your dog gets less attention because you're consumed with the baby, it's completely normal and OK. Many people report that they engage less with their pets when they're caring for a new baby. Your pet isn't suffering because you pet and play with him a little less. It's an adjustment, and most animals do just fine.