



Congratulations...you are pregnant! You have a dog? So, how should you be preparing for a baby's arrival?

Most people have about eight months' notice that a baby will be arriving. Therefore, this gives you ample scope to consider how the arrival of a baby will impact your lifestyle and that of your dog.

Ideally at least 6 months before your baby is due, you should prepare the canine household for the changes that are about to happen by asking yourself a few questions...

Will the dog be allowed access to the same areas in the house it has been up until now?

Is your dog already used to babies and small children, if not how can you condition your dog?

Does your dog react to noise or sensitive to sudden high pitched sounds?

Is the dog allowed on the sofa or on your bed, what will you do if the baby is laid there?

Will you have the same amount of time and energy for your dog?

Will you have an increase in visitors?

How will you keep your baby safe from the dog when changing the nappy on the floor?

Will your dog leave the room on command immediately and reliably?

Will you be able to manage walking the dog and pushing the buggy at the same time?

Is there a safe place for your dog to go if either of you need space?

Is your dog obedient and can you ask it to go on its bed and stay there?

How will you deal with visitors when they arrive, talking in the same vice tones to the baby as the dog is used to?

How will your dog cope when you have less time to spend with it?

Will your dog release any object on command?

How will the dog behave with a plethora of new toys about the place?

Will your dog move if someone walks (or crawls) towards it?



Considering the answers to these questions will help you put a plan in place to set up new routines to ensure the transition goes as smoothly as is possible. What you do not want, is for your dog to make a negative association with the arrival or presence of a baby.

The best way to prepare is to have a real hard think about all that you will be doing as a new parent for example: Your lifestyle will change immeasurably and although you will only truly recognise the ramifications for you and your dog, after the event, commonly speaking the following is essential.

It should go without saying that if you have any concerns about your dog in regard to safety that you contact a canine behaviourist way before the birth date.

1. ***Welcome home...***Get your dog used to paraphernalia – the high chair, the changing mat, the new baby toys, the clothes et al before the event.
2. ***Be real...***Imagine the routines; breakfast time will be different, waking up time will be different, bed time and sleep patterns somewhat altered. Perhaps get your dog used to eating only once per day in the evening and just a bonio, chicken wing or similar for breakfast. Have the dog sleep downstairs in the kitchen so that when baby does arrive you will not be pacing the hallway trying to get the baby to sleep with the dog in the way.
3. ***Do as I say...***Teach that your commands are just that; commands – and not suggestions. Communicate effectively “no go” zone areas around the changing mat by teaching a command that ensures the dog does not get any nearer than an arm’s length of the mat and leaving (and staying out of) the room on command.
4. ***Dolly daydream.*** It may be useful to purchase a lifelike doll; not because that truly replicates a living being, but simply to condition the dog to you moving around the room, bouncing the doll, talking to the doll and teaching the dog when you cuddle dolly on the sofa – the dog is not a part of that. Similar voice tones are used to talk to both children and dogs and there may be some confusion from the dogs point of view when you start cooing over a baby – practice with the doll first!
5. ***Buggy Bear...***If your dog pulls on the lead or even if he doesn’t it is really useful to practice walking with a push chair before the baby arrives – most importantly so that it becomes a norm for the dog, but also so that you can train the dog with any empty push chair to ensure smooth walks onwards.
6. ***Cuddles are for babies...***Whilst hormones are raging, emotions are flying around and nesting is taking place, before the baby arrives it may be that cuddling your dog is the one thing that you want to do. Don’t! You really need to be working on the fact that when baby arrives, time for your dog and cuddles will be reduced – if you are all over your dog until the baby arrives – you will be making a most difficult time for you and for your dog.



7. ***Don't compensate*** inappropriately. If you are busy all day with baby and then when baby sleeps, it is time for the dog, all you are teaching to your canine chum is that life is better when the baby is not around – the exact opposite of what you should be teaching.
8. ***A new life*** is on the horizon for you and your dog and it will never be the same again (in a good way!) Therefore utilise the time you have prior to the birth to be fair to your dog and get him used to how life will be from now on and for the next 12 years or so, that is going to be a lot less attention from you than it is now!
9. ***Wake up...***this is not advice for others with dogs that are not as gorgeous, cute, friendly and human as yours is. It is for you; the owner of a powerful social predator. ***Never*** be complacent and think that your dog is not an animal; he lives by his own rules and his communication system is not conducive to talking to a baby in the way that we deem fit.
10. ***Be Responsible*** – If you need help, get help, pay for help – a professional can work wonders and see things that you cant. In situations of new baby introductions – no chances should ever be taken.
11. ***As hard as it is*** start ignoring your dog – whilst when you are at home pregnant, cooking dinner, watching TV or whatever it may be tempting to talk to and fuss your dog – that is going to change, so ignore your dog in those situations in which you will be very busy later on!

The ultimate aim is when your beautiful new baby arrives home, when you are exhausted and family and friends are flooding through the door ignoring you and your dog in favour of seeing the baby – nothing much should alter for your dog – he should be completely accustomed to it.

The Homecoming

It is fair to say, you may be quite tired and who knows what time of day or night you will arrive home. If you have done your ground work, it shouldn't be an issue – the dog should be in a room, comfortably and contentedly away from you.

Whether you do the introductions now or later is dependent on you and a whole array of circumstantial factors. If granny and granddad are there and the neighbourhood welcoming committee, leave it until tomorrow when calmness reigns.

Whenever you decide to introduce your new, wonderful and precious baby to your wonderful and precious dog; do it with caution. Not all dogs will be immediately in love with the interloper that you bring home!

The dog may well find the smells, noises and movements of your baby very interesting, so wait until your dog is relaxed before you introduce it to your baby.



Maybe have someone exercise the dog beforehand so all is calm. It should be a quiet and organised affair, with your dog on lead and, of course with someone else present.

When you are ready invite the dog to have a sniff of the baby's foot, encased in your hand (again, if you had or now have any doubts – a *canine* (not 'animal') behaviourist needs to be sought.

Any attempt to jump up, lick or be boisterous should be dealt with firmly and consistently; as noted above – a command is not optional.

Of course my dog will love my baby – yes, that is what most people think. Whether you own a Chihuahua, a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, a Labrador, a German Shepherd dog, a St Bernard or a mixed breed, there are absolutely no guarantees.

Babies are weird to dogs who are not au fait with them. Why?

They Smell and yes, they may smell of you. But they will also smell quite different. They will need fully investigating (not that you should allow that). They also urinate and defecate frequently, which again from the dogs point of view needs fully investigating. Dogs may wish to eat the contents of the nappy etc which draws them to the baby.

They Scream. Babies cry and scream for food, comfort, warmth etc. So do young puppies. Therefore intrinsically the dog will be interested in the new and unusual vocalisations. Prey animals scream and make high pitched vocalisations which also triggers a dog's innate drive – but in a different and more dangerous way.

*They are on you...*the dog is on the floor, and the new 'thing' is on you, taking all of that affection and attention that was previously available for your dog.

They take their place, love and ad-hoc attention for the dog is now greatly reduced

They usurp position; when new dogs enter the family pack, they start at the bottom and genes and behaviour plays a part as to where they end up. Your new baby has just entered the pack near the top – for some dogs, that will cause conflict.

*They need you...*yes, both of them need you. However, whatever, wherever, whenever...

***NEVER LEAVE A BABY AND A DOG ALONE IN THE SAME ROOM TOGETHER
– EVER, EVER, EVER!***

For more information email info@dogsee.org or view the Canine and Feline Behaviour Association Website www.cfba.co.uk for a Canine Behaviour Practitioner in your area.