

The sooner you start to prepare your dog for the arrival of a new baby, the better. The more time you spend on training him, helping him to adjust to the changes that are coming, the easier the whole process will be! The arrival should be as stress free and pleasurable for you both as possible.

First steps

- Tell your midwife you have a dog and discuss this leaflet as part of your preparation.
- Don't wait until the last few weeks or when the new baby arrives to start the preparations. It's important 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

- Ensure a basic understanding of good behaviour to make both your lives much easier. Brush up on training so that he sits, lies down and remains quiet for short periods on command, won't jump up, can walk on lead without pulling, and come when called.
- Solve any behaviour problems such as aggression, separation anxiety or any fear behaviours. Ask your vet to refer you to a good local animal behaviourist.
- Your dog should be healthy and up to date with his worming tablets and vaccinations.
- If your dog's an 'only' pet, it's quite likely that he's used to having your full attention whenever he wants it. You'll soon be busy with the new baby so, to avoid a negative reaction, get him used to being alone in a safe area with his bed and a tasty chew item for short periods of time every day.
- If you're planning to keep your dog out of certain rooms or areas of the house after the baby arrives, start doing this now. Ideally, he shouldn't be allowed in baby's bedroom.
- Teach him to walk gently next to the pram, without pulling.
- Bring new items of furniture such as playpens, carry cots and highchairs into the house, so that he can get used to them.
- Try to teach your dog the difference between his toys and those that'll 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 baby arrives and stick to it, to help him cope with the changes.
- If the expectant mum is the one who has previously done most of the interacting, dog walking and feeding of the dog, it'll help the dog adjust to having less time and attention from her in the future if her partner starts taking over most of these duties.

Once the baby has arrived

- Bring home worn clothes of the new baby and allow your dog to sniff. Reward him if he stays calm.
- Try not to make a big deal about the new arrival. Teach your dog how to approach the baby properly and gently. Allow him to make safe initial investigations and approaches.
- Help him to see the baby as a nice thing to be around. Give treats and lots of praise when he behaves well around the baby. If possible, take the whole family for a short,

exciting walk as soon as the baby arrives so that he associates pleasurable activities with the baby's arrival.

- Always use positive training techniques and never punish or reprimand your dog around the baby. Never hit or shout at him for approaching the baby in the wrong way. Gently, show him what you wish him to do and reward him when he gets it right.
- Don't place the baby on the floor with him and **NEVER** leave your baby alone with any dog.
- Make sure he has enough exercise and things to do – a bored dog with too much energy can get up to all sorts of mischief while you're 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.

