

PREPARING YOUR CAT FOR A NEW BABY

Expecting the arrival of a baby is an extremely exciting time for everyone involved, and we're here to help you prepare your cat(s) so the transition is as smooth and positive as possible. This is a major life change for the home, especially if this is your feline friend's first, and cats typically love daily routines and familiar people (which will all change once baby comes), so we want to get them adjusted as stress-free as possible. Follow these tips to start preparing your resident cat(s) for your baby now, so the only change once the baby comes is the baby themselves!

BEFORE THE BABY ARRIVES

INTRODUCE AS MANY SMELLS THAT WILL BECOME NORMS IN THE HOME AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

Use baby powders, baby soaps, and lotions that you plan to use once the baby comes on yourself regularly so that these become familiar and not associated with the brand new addition. This will help your cat(s) slowly adjust and feel less of a change at the time the baby comes home. These small changes will make your household smell different and your cat **will** notice it, so introducing these smells before the baby arrives helps create less of a major change once the baby is home.

SET UP THE NURSERY IN AN AREA YOUR CAT DOESN'T SPEND A TON OF TIME

For example, if they have a favorite window or favorite room, try to leave them this space. This will allow them to go to their comfortable safe zone if they are feeling stressed out when the baby arrives. Setting up the nursery early will also allow your cat to adjust to the spatial changes in the home. Cats can take time to get used to change, so giving them as much time as possible to adjust to a lot of the changes before the baby comes will ultimately help set them up for a smoother transition.

ONCE THE NURSERY IS SET UP, ENCOURAGE YOUR CAT TO EXPLORE IT

This will allow them to feel safe and secure around this space once the family begins spending more time there. Furniture moving around, new furniture, the smell of new paint, and all new products can be scary or just confusing for your cat so allowing them to adjust to the space will help the transition and ease their stress long-term.

SET UP OTHER SPOTS IN YOUR HOME TO LOOK LIKE THEY WILL WHEN THE BABY ARRIVES

Cats are sensitive to change! Set up other areas of your home to look how they will be set up when your baby arrives. This includes setting up objects like your stroller, baby swings, bassinets, etc, so the home isn't suddenly filled with too many brand-new things as soon as the baby comes home.

AT LEAST 1 MONTH IN ADVANCE: ESTABLISH CHANGES TO THE DAILY ROUTINE

Once the baby comes home, keep feeding, playtime, petting time consistent. It is important that your cat's needs for play and attention are not ignored with the arrival of the baby. You should also get them used to other routines, such as always closing the nursery door at night, or throughout the day when the baby would be sleeping, so that your cat gets used to things sometimes being off-limits.

CRYING IS OFTEN THE SCARIEST PART OF THE NEW BABY EXPERIENCE FOR A CAT

Try to get your cat desensitized to this by playing baby crying noises around your home so the sound becomes more familiar.

ONCE THE BABY IS HOME

PLEASE BE PATIENT!

Cats need time to adapt to change and if your cat's behavior is a little bit "off" at first, remember that no matter how much you can help to prepare them, this is a major life change for everyone in the family and eventually everyone, including your cat(s) will settle in. Allow your cat to set the pace of introduction- if they want to hide or avoid the baby, do not try to pick them up to bring them over to the baby, or bring the baby over to their space. Let them set the boundaries. The more in control the cat feels, the less stressed they will end up being. If they are showing signs of stress (hiding, less appetite, hissing, or not acting normal) make sure they have enough safe spaces and spots to hide/perch.

IF YOUR CAT IS READY TO BE NEAR THE BABY...

Keep interactions brief and positive. Give them something they love like grooming, treats, special food, or playtime when the baby is nearby, and end the interaction before the cat starts showing signs of stress. We want to create positive associations with your baby- when your baby is nearby, your cat gets exciting and great things!

AS YOUR BABY GROWS, YOUR CAT MAY GET SCARED AGAIN

Toddlers crawling can be scary for cats because of their unpredictable movements. Follow the above steps again to let them adjust during new life stages.