

# introducing your dog to a new baby

## *dog training basics*

As a new parent, you're probably concerned about how your dog is going to react to your new baby. Many people surrender their pets to animal shelters because of the change in their daily routine after a new baby's arrival. Yet many families have been successful in introducing their dogs to a new baby and establishing a new routine. Here are some tips for preparing your dog for the arrival of a new baby.

### **Preparing your dog:**

Preparing your dog in advance of the baby's arrival is one of the best ways to help avoid friction and too abrupt of a change in daily routines. Your dog is used to your undivided attention and pampering, and an abrupt change in routine is sure to happen when your new baby comes home with you and becomes the center of attention. Taking some precautions, taking a few minutes of quality time and giving some extra treats can go a long way!

### **Before bringing home your baby:**

Take your pet to the veterinarian for a complete checkup a few months before the baby arrives. Worms and parasites found in dogs can be harmful to your baby. If your dog is not spayed or neutered, this is the time to get it done.

Dogs are creatures of habit, so try to keep their routine as normal as possible. If you anticipate changes, start early in adjusting your dog to the new sleeping and play areas and feeding and walking schedules that may occur after the arrival of the baby. It is best not to make too many changes all at once.

Allow your dog to explore the baby's sleeping and diaper changing areas as well as



Developed with and approved by a qualified veterinarian.

related items such as baby powder, lotions and diapers so your dog becomes familiar with the new smells and objects. Apply baby lotion or powder to your hands, for example, and allow your dog to sniff the new smell. Dogs rely on their sense of smell, so familiarity with the new baby smells will help your dog recognize the baby as a part of the family. If possible, allow your dog to smell clothing that your baby has used before you bring the baby home.

Do not allow your dog to sleep on the baby's furniture or play with the baby's toys. Your dog should know that the furniture is off-limits and should treat it as such. Provide toys for your dog that do not resemble baby toys. Your dog may take a toy from the baby's hand and unintentionally injure the infant.

Expose your dog to small children, watch how they react and try to identify any potential problems.

### **Introducing your dog to your baby:**

When the baby comes home, another person should hold the baby while you greet your dog. Your dog has missed you and it is important to pay attention to them when you first get home. Greet your dog happily and tell them how much you've missed them. Bring your dog a new toy as a gift to associate the baby with something positive. After your dog's excitement about your homecoming has dissipated, you should start introducing your baby to the dog.

If you are unsure of your dog's behavior, leash or restrain them during the introduction. Talk to your dog, pet them and encourage them to get a good look and sniff the baby's hands and feet. Do not force a reluctant dog by pushing the infant in front of your pet. Allow your pet to explore the new smells at their own pace, but never leave your baby unsupervised with your pet, as the actions of a baby may scare your dog and cause them to bite in self-defense.

Never leave your dog alone with your baby.

**Note: The information on this Care Sheet is not a substitute for veterinary care. If you need additional information, please contact your veterinarian.**