

Preparing your cat for a new baby

Taking time to prepare your family pets for your new baby's arrival and properly introducing them once your baby is born will help to make this transition peaceful for everyone involved. Your cat can still be a loving part of your family after your new baby has come home. Taking these steps to prepare your cat for the baby's arrival will help to ensure a smooth transition.

- **Prepare your cat for baby smells.** Begin to wear the kinds of lotions, powders, and other products that will be used with the baby. After your baby is born, bring home one of her blankets from the hospital to allow your cat to adjust to those smells as well.
 - **Prepare your cat for baby sounds.** A baby's crying and screaming can be disturbing to a cat, so preparation is key. Find a recording of baby sounds and play the sounds at low volume while your cat is eating or playing. With each session, raise the volume just a little until your cat appears more comfortable with the sounds. You might also want to expose your cat to various baby toys, musical mobiles, and other sound-making devices before the baby comes home.
 - **Change your cat's environment gradually.** Whether preparing a nursery, painting walls or purchasing new furniture, do so in small stages to allow your cat time to adjust. Cats rely on consistency, and even small changes to their environment can cause considerable stress. When the various areas are finished, play with your cat in those places to help him build positive feelings about them.
 - **Take precautions against toxoplasmosis.** This infectious disease is extremely rare in indoor cats, but can cause severe injury or death to a developing fetus. Toxoplasmosis is most often transmitted through infected feces or soil (which can contain egg spores), so indoors-only cats hardly ever become infected. Still, expectant mothers can further reduce any risk by wearing gloves and a mask while cleaning litter boxes, or asking another family member to do the job. Wear gloves while gardening as well.
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Introducing your cat to the new baby

- **Keep your cat's schedule intact.** When you're busy with your new baby, try not to neglect your cat. Have one person play with the cat while someone else tends to the baby. Use Feliway, a synthetic copy of the feline facial pheromone used by cats to mark their territory as safe and secure, to reduce the stress of multiple visitors. Confine your cat to a safe room if necessary.
- **Don't allow your cat access to the baby's crib.** Install a sturdy screen door at the entrance to the nursery or keep the door closed and place a baby monitor in the room.
- **Supervise your cat and baby whenever they're together.** Never leave a baby or small child unattended around an animal. No matter how young the child or gentle the animal, too many things can go wrong, and both can get hurt. Once your baby starts to crawl, supervision is even more important. Your child should never be allowed to grab, chase or pick up the cat, so keep your child and cat separate when supervision isn't possible.