



# EXPECTANT PARENTS

## Tips for Expectant Parents

Expectant parents regularly ask us what they should do with their dog or puppy when the new baby arrives. The problem of how to successfully integrate baby and canine is a complex one and largely depends on the present situation and mindset of the individual.

Some people quite happily allow their dog or puppy to still do what it always did and sleep where it always slept. Others want to make radical changes and will sometimes do this on the eve of bringing the new baby home. This is totally unfair and will create problems almost immediately. Any change must be planned and you have at least 9 months to do so. With proper management and training there should be no problems if the process is well thought out in advance.

Below are some guidelines for preparing both of you, your dog and family for the arrival of a new baby. If you are expecting a new baby, a second or third sibling, or even a new puppy in conjunction with a young child (e.g. – child adoption) there are some clear steps that need to be taken both prior and upon arrival. Dogs of all ages can feel shunned and become confused and stressed with a new arrival of any age. A dog does not understand why a baby is suddenly the focus of attention and why the dog may feel that it has inadvertently slipped down the pecking order (**NB – Children should not be allowed to correct the dog under any circumstances**).

Please be aware of the below attention seeking behaviours, which need to be corrected as soon as they appear:-

- 🐾 Jumping up (on you / on you whilst you are attending the baby)
- 🐾 Stealing baby items
- 🐾 Marking or going into the baby's room when unattended (NB – always ensure that the dog is either in line of site, or there is a secure baby gate at the entrance of the baby's room)
- 🐾 Reaction barking / whining when the baby cries or is upset
- 🐾 Nudging / jumping / mouthing clothes when the parent is feeding the baby
- 🐾 Obnoxious buggy behaviour (i.e. – jumping or pulling in front of it)

### ***SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS***

Firstly the sleeping arrangements must be established before you bring the new baby home. Think carefully where your baby will sleep and the fact that you might need to bring your baby into your bedroom for feeding etc. An over exuberant or out of control puppy or dog that is used to sleeping on the bed, could present a danger to a newborn baby.

Crating a dog or puppy when the baby arrives can help, and this should be introduced early on and well before the baby is born, giving the puppy/dog time to adjust. Don't think of crating as a punishment or a bad thing. Dogs learn to love crates, especially if they are covered over and are dark and warm inside. This acts as a den for them and makes them feel safe. Some dogs will take time to adjust, especially if they have been allowed to sleep on your bed, so be patient and know that this will be the best option for all concerned. Although the crating can be beneficial, no dog or puppy should be left unattended for hours on end. Evening time is okay, as most dogs just sleep all night anyway providing they have been allowed to eliminate before retiring.

If you wish the puppy or dog to sleep outside, you need to introduce this well before the baby is born. On the other hand, it is not necessary to change normal interaction with your puppy or dog providing that you practice good management between dog and baby and ensuring that you NEVER leave your baby unattended with your dog or puppy at anytime.



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## *What to action before the baby arrives*

- 🐾 **What changes need to be made** – You must recognise what changes you would like to make to the dogs place in the family. Where possible, these changes should be implemented by the 5<sup>th</sup> month of the pregnancy, but certainly no later than the 8<sup>th</sup> month. These may include moving an inside dog to outside, not allowing the dog into certain rooms, placement of bouncer type toys in the general area (familiarity for the dog), not allowing the dog onto the bed and lounge or even just wandering unattended through the house.
- 🐾 **Basic Training** – For the 4 weeks prior to your baby's arrival, and for the 2 weeks following, you must work mentally with the dog for a minimum of 15 minutes (not necessarily all in one block). Distance control, attention training, door manners, and ensuring that the dog is focusing on you which is incredibly important.
- 🐾 **Dog's Routine Changes** – You must recognise that the feeding times may change, and that walking times WILL change as will the general attention focused on the dog will wane especially in the first few weeks. Ensure that entertainment is adequate and changes daily (ie – Buster Cubes, Kongs, scatter feeding, squeaky toys where applicable, digging pits, and a calming low carb high quality diet). Also, consider the possibility of a weekly dog walker to be implemented at least one month in advance if you are worried about exercise levels.
- 🐾 **Prepare your dog for the sights and sounds of a baby.** Many dogs bark, jump up or even hide when a baby cries because they are unsure whether something is wrong. The easiest way to anticipate this problem is to buy a doll that giggles and cries like a baby, wrap it in a baby blanket, and carry it with you throughout the house. Alternatively, record a newborn cry when at pre-natal class at the hospital, and play it in the house at irregular times. If the dog becomes upset when the doll cries, correct his behaviour immediately to show that you are in control.
- 🐾 **Teach your dog to accept baby scents.** Before the hospital trip, purchase a cheap blanket, cut it into 8 pieces and place a piece UNDER the sleeping baby each night whilst in hospital. The partner then brings that piece home each day and places it into the dogs' kennel or sleeping area, for familiarization.

## *PRACTICING FOR THE BIG DAY*

It is vitally important to give your puppy or dog some experience of what is to come. We normally suggest the use of a doll that cries like a baby. A crying baby can sometimes create extreme excitement or panic in an unsuspecting puppy or dog, inciting them to jump up in an effort to see where the noise is coming from.

Practice sessions to prepare the dog or puppy for the experience of a new baby in the home are vitally important and will allow you the opportunity to educate our puppy or dog and to correct any undesirable behaviour long before the real baby arrives. When baby does arrive you will already have your puppy or dog under your effective control.

## *When the baby arrives*

- 🐾 **Introducing the baby and the dog** - Don't feel compelled to introduce the baby on the first day – coming home is stressful enough! Just think about it from the dog's point of view. The mother (a pack leader) has been missing for 4-6 days, so the dog is already out of its comfort zone, especially if she is usually the one who does the training and nurturing. Through a security door / dog gate allow the dog to scent the baby – this is the safest way of gauging how the dog will react. If the dog lunges or shows signs of



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aggression (not exuberance), correct the dog's behaviour (NB – the dog must be on a LOOSE lead). Settle the dog down before you attempt to introduce them again. Once the dog is settled with a door between them and the new baby (NB – this can take weeks) allow the dog to have complete skin to skin contact, again on a loose lead, with both owners in a standing position.

- 🐾 **Allow frequent supervised visits by your dog** - The more the dog and baby are together, the better and less stressed your dog will be. Some dogs take longer than others and safety is always a must (older dogs can be snappy (set in their routine) and puppies can be over exuberant and injure a baby without meaning to). *However, you must NEVER leave your baby alone in the same room with your dog. There have been some horrendous events that have occurred when dogs were left unattended with babies and young children.*
- 🐾 **Consider putting your indoor dog in their den or crate when you need time alone with the baby** – Putting your dog in their den will help you to manage your dog when you're feeding or changing the baby. However, ensure that the dog is already used to being inside their den well before the baby comes home, and there is always a positive association (ie – Never put them in their den as a punishment).
- 🐾 **Nappies must be disposed of correctly**– soiled nappies can present a problem when the baby arrives as the scent will prove very enticing to your dog. So precautions should be taken at all times. Do not leave dirty nappies anywhere your dog can reach them (You must keep your dog well away from soiled nappies.) Dogs have been known to try and get to a nappy when it is still on the baby with horrendous results. Another important reason not to leave a dog and a baby alone.
- 🐾 **Keep your dog away from your baby's head.** For instance, if you change your baby's nappy on the floor on a mat or blanket, teach the dog to stay off that area and to not go near the baby when on the floor. Once the nappy is changed, allow the dog to sniff the baby's feet - but never allow the dog to sniff the baby's head, face or lick their fingers. If the baby moves suddenly, the dog can become frightened and his natural instinct will be to duck away or snap at the baby. Having said that, the dog should either be on its bed, or OUT of the baby's room, as prevention is better than an accident.
- 🐾 **Dogs should have their own toys** – You shouldn't allow a dog to chew on or steal a baby's toy, in the same way that you wouldn't allow a puppy to steal and eat your shoes! Don't chase the dog if it does steal a toy, correct the behaviour, crouch and call the dog, to you, then replace with a more suitable treat (pigs ear, rawhide, dog toy, etc).

Although it is normal for a dog to be possessive about his toys, food and space, it is NOT acceptable for him to growl or snap at you or your child at any time. If this happens, the situation needs immediate attention. Call your Bark Buster therapist.

## ***MANAGING BABY AND DOG***

When you have a young baby and a dog or puppy, you must at all times be very watchful. Do not think, *"My dog is great, he won't hurt a fly"*.

Even though you might think your dog is a little human on four legs, dogs and puppies are still wild creatures that have just been domesticated. If given the right circumstances they can still behave in the same way as a creature in the wild. Don't take anything for granted. Always ensure that you watch the baby when your puppy or dog is around. Never leave your baby unattended.



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## ***NO NEED TO PANIC***

Don't panic and think, *"Oh! This is too much... I must find another home for my puppy or dog"*. This is definitely not the case. Your puppy or dog and child can co-exist quite safely. You just need to practice good management. Many people have raised puppies and children together without any problems.

Just remember to practice good management as well as education and your children will enjoy the pleasure of having a wonderful pet as part of the family.

As long as you maintain authority over your dog, and teach your dog and children the rules of interacting safely and respectfully with each other, your family pack will be peaceful, happy and safe.

As your child grows it is also imperative that you teach your child not to hit, kick, approach, push or go near a dog whilst eating. Please refer to the "Avoiding Dog Bites / Dog Safety For Children" and "Dally Says" child safety related issues.

The golden rule must always be: NEVER LEAVE A CHILD AND DOG ALONE TOGETHER.

*Please call us anytime if you require assistance.*



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