



Will Baby Make Four?

Congratulations!

You have a "bundle of joy" on the way. Introducing a newborn baby into your home

is a big change for the entire family, including the family dog. However, a baby on the way shouldn't mean an eviction notice for your dog. With preparation and a few good management strategies, babies and pets can be a successful combination. The San Francisco SPCA Dog Behavior Department offers the following guidelines for a safe, smooth introduction, and the beginning of a wonderful friendship.

If you are expecting a baby and do not presently have a dog but are "thinking" about adding a dog before baby arrives, please consider the following:

It is often difficult to transition a dog into your home during the short time span of a pregnancy +/- 9 months. You may feel the desire to nurture, which is natural when you are expecting, but it is often best to wait for the baby to arrive before giving in to these feelings.

After the baby arrives a new mother may be overwhelmed with all the changes in her life, such as nighttime interruptions, nighttime feedings, breastfeeding, pain during recovery, fatigue, and depression, to name a few. A new dog might just add to the feeling of being overwhelmed.



Before Baby Pregnancy Months 1-3

Enroll in a Positive Reward Based Training Class. These classes offer humane training techniques. This will refresh obedience behaviors, manners and teach new behaviors. The San Francisco SPCA offers a specialized training class for Expecting and New Parents. The SFSPCA also offers a wide range of beginner to advanced classes.



If your dog has a pre-existing behavior problem you will need to address this with rehabilitation and management. The San Francisco SPCA has a referral list of trainers available for private in-home consultations.

Visit your vet for a complete medical check up and make sure your dog is current on vaccinations.

Spay or Neuter your pet.

Pregnancy Months 3-5 before baby

Prepare a comfortable confinement area or crate for your dog inside your home. Your dog may be stressed or confused by all the day and nighttime activities and he may be more comfortable relaxing in a quiet resting area. This would also be a good time to introduce baby gates as confinement or threshold barriers.



Introduce baby sounds (CD's-available online) and practice holding a baby-sized doll in your arms. You will need to get used to using only one arm to do many things, as the baby will be in the other, it's good to practice now.

Walk the dog with baby equipment, such as a baby carrier (front of chest carrier) and/ or stroller.

Remember constant rewards of tasty treats are very important during this preparation time. You want to build a positive association with all these changes.

Pregnancy Months 5-7

Introduce a change in schedule to your dog's daily routine, randomly and slowly. Practice varied time in his confinement area with a KONG or another stimulating puzzle toy. This will make quiet time training fun.

If the expectant mother is the primary dog walker or caretaker, please introduce a new walker or caretaker.

This can be a spouse, partner, friend or professional dog walker. The San Francisco SPCA has a referral list of dog walking services and pet sitters.



Car safety is very important and should not be overlooked. The dog will need to be confined to a specific area of the car by barrier or crate. This will ensure a safe ride for both baby and dog.

Pregnancy Months 7-9 The Home Stretch

Introduce baby room and baby furniture so the dog can get accustomed to the changing home environment. Use a baby gate if the dog will not be allowed into the baby's room. Practice sit, stays, and don't touch around the baby's furniture and baby equipment.

Simulate baby-feeding time, either in your bed or nursing chair. This is a time your dog should be in his confinement area or crate. This is an important quiet time for mom and baby. While nursing, you will need to be calm and focused on the baby. Remember to give the dog a Kong or other puzzle toy during this quiet time.

Prepare for care of your dog while you are at the hospital. Arrange for a person who can pick up the dog from your home, or will stay in the home with your dog. Make sure this person has a set of your house keys in case you're already at the hospital but the dog is at home. The San Francisco SPCA has a referral list of Pet Sitters and Board and Train Facilities.

After Baby Months 1-3 Congratulations!

While Mom is in the hospital, spouse or partner can bring home some newborn items (such as blanket, or clothing) to introduce to the dog.

Your dog may spend a day or two with a friend or sitter so you can settle in with baby. Or you can enlist extra help when you arrive home from the hospital. You can say hello to your dog and spend some time with him while someone is caring for baby.

Newborn care can be overwhelming for new parents. Help around the house, with childcare or dog care can be a relief and help reduce stress.



Soiled diapers should be contained in a tightly closed container.

The dog's exercise routine should remain consistent to pre-baby. If possible increase exercise activity for the next several weeks. A well-exercised dog will be calm and more relaxed. This is the time you want to enlist help to keep your dog's routine as consistent as possible.

Make all introductions to your newborn short and positive. Rewards are very important during this time. You want to build a positive association with the newborn and all the new, exciting changes in your family.

Months 4-7

Your newborn is now a baby and is changing daily. The baby will enjoy play in a playpen, roll around on the ground with toys, and start to move around much more. Your baby will squeal, laugh and cry in frustration.



Management and strict supervision is needed! Again, rewards for your dog during this time is very important, so you can build a positive association to the baby during this stage.

It is a good time for family and dog outings, either for walks or rides in the car. It is important to include the baby in activities that the dog will find enjoyable such as fun family outings.

Months 7-12

Babies and toddlers are often the most difficult to manage around dogs. They are crawling, pulling up on objects, beginning to walk, and explorers, intrigued by tactile, oral, and visual senses. They grab, pull, bite, and have raw determination. They will put objects in their mouth, so pick up all small objects and dog toys.

Babies should never be allowed to climb on, crawl on or startle your dog. Babies and Toddlers do not have complete control of motor skills, so they may inadvertently throw or hit a dog with a hard toy. Toddlers are not expert walkers and may trip and fall on or near the dog, another reason for strict supervision and management. Supervision with baby and dog is mandatory. Keep interactions enjoyable for dog and use

a baby gate or dog area to separate baby and dog when needed.

You should begin to model the appropriate behavior of child-dog interaction. Show your baby how to gently pet the dog, and praise both for a successful interaction. This teaching will continue for many years to come.

Babies and toddlers are too young to understand boundaries and must be kept away from pet areas and feeding bowls.

Sitters should not be responsible for both baby and dog. When you leave your baby with a sitter, please keep your dog in a secure confinement area.

The success of a child and dog relationship depends on constant parent/adult supervision, management, teaching, and modeling appropriate behavior for interactions.

The baby and dog should always have parental supervision, even when the baby is in a crib, bassinet, high chair, playpen, rocker/bouncer, swing, doorway jumper, bathtub, baby carrier, car seat or stroller.

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Dog Behavior & Training

