

## **When Cat Meets Baby: Make the Transition a Good One**

A new baby can bring a lot of joy into the home (and, of course, some stress). The adjustment might take time, but baby and your cat can co-exist, even happily. Here are some tips on helping ensure that happens:

- Use the entire pregnancy to get your cat used to the idea of a little one. Play tapes of baby noises, or rub baby lotion on your hands before engaging in a pleasant activity with your cat. Set up nursery furniture as soon as possible and allow the cat time to investigate it before certain areas (the changing table and crib) are put off-limits. That way the cat knows there's nothing unusual or scary about those areas.
- At least one month before the baby arrives, make the surfaces unwelcoming. Cut sheets of cardboard to the size of the furniture and put sticky table on it.
- If a litter box had been in the soon-to-be nursery, move it a few inches a day to its new location. Give yourself plenty of time to get it moved completely before baby arrives. Consider covering that area with a diaper pail or dresser so the animal isn't tempted to potty there again.
- If cat care routines are going to shift from new mother to partner, those routines should be switched one to two months before the birth so the cat gets used to new routines.
- When you first arrive home from the hospital after baby is born, peacefully greet your cat without interruption. After you've reconnected, let everyone else in: Your partner, baby, grandparents, etc. Your cat will likely flee the hoopla.
- Place a used receiving blanket or piece of infant clothing in a quiet area where the cat can investigate it.
- Allow the cat to approach and quick things out while mom is nursing.
- Don't allow the cat in the crib.
- Close the door to the nursery when the baby is napping. If there is no door to close, install a temporary screen door or hang mosquito netting over the crib to keep the cat out.

Source: Jacque Lynn Schultz, CPDT