

# We Are Family

## Preparing your cat for a baby's arrival

Cats will continue to be a loving part of your family after your new baby has arrived. Smooth the way by taking a few easy steps to prepare and then introduce the baby in a way your cat will understand.

### Preparation



Cats have a reputation for being curious, but they are often cautious of change. By knowing which changes your cat will find disruptive you can minimise the chance of fear, stress and misbehaviour in your cat.

#### New smells

Cats communicate with scent, and identify 'friends' as smelling similar to them. That's one reason they cheek-rub against you.

- Start wearing baby powder or lotion weeks in advance. Your cat will then begin to associate these smells with someone he already knows.
- After your baby is born, bring home a used baby blanket or clothing from the hospital to get your cat familiar with the baby's scent.

#### New sounds

The cries of a baby sound similar to kitten distress cries, so the sound can be upsetting at first for cats. Prepare your cat for baby sounds over several weeks.

- Find a recording or video of baby sounds and play it at low volume to introduce the sound. Gradually increase the volume as the cat gets used to the sound. If the cat investigates the sound or acts calm, reward with praise, pats and treats.
- If your cat show stress, try petting or playing a favourite game with your cat before you play the sound, so they associate the infant cries with a benefit for them.
- Expose your cat to the sounds of the baby's toys like musical mobiles or squeaky toys.



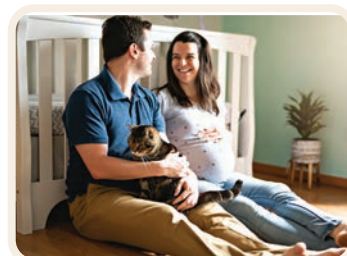
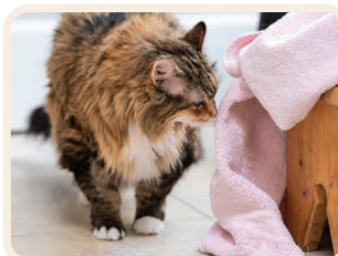
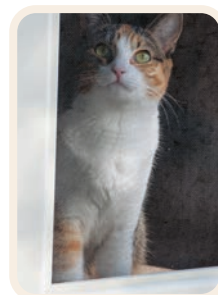
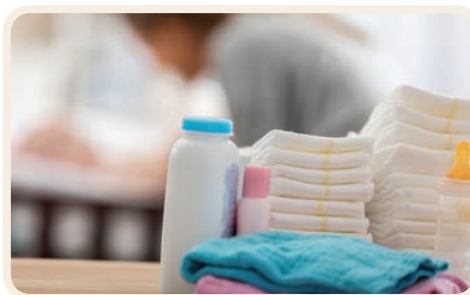
#### New routine

Your routine will change a lot once the baby arrives. Try to make some changes in advance so your cat won't associate the baby with suddenly receiving less attention.

#### Changes in the home

Change your cat's environment gradually to allow your cat time to adjust. Let them investigate the new things so they don't feel left out.

- Invest in a screen door to keep them out of the nursery when you can't supervise, and be sensitive to your cat, especially if they had access to that room before.
- A new baby can mean new visitors to the house more often. Provide your cat with a safe place they escape to or confine them to a room if necessary.



# Introduction



## Cats are often very accepting of babies

When you bring the baby home, try not to make a big deal of the introduction. You want your cat to accept this is a normal part of their life.

## Don't force the introduction

If your cat acts interested, allow them to sniff the baby's foot. By allowing your cat to see and smell your newborn baby, they will learn there's nothing to fear.

## Praise your cat when they behave well

Once the cat understands that treating the baby as one of the family and in a respectful way is to their advantage, there should be no problem.

## Make a special baby-cat time

Make a special baby-cat time when you're feeding your new baby and have treats to toss to the cat or a special toy at the same time. That way your cat will associate positive feelings with the baby's presence.

## Growing together

Spend quality time with your cat every day. It could be when your baby is having a nap and you are resting, this is a great opportunity to give your cat some undivided attention.

## As the baby grows, teach your child to respect the cat

Be sure that your cat has a private retreat to escape from reaching toddler hands. Mutual respect and careful supervision will grow into a loving bond as your infant grows up alongside your pet cat.

Supervise your cat and baby whenever they're together.  
Never leave a baby or small child unattended around an animal.



## Tip

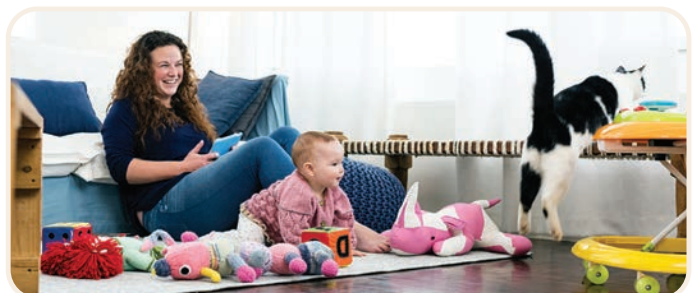
When you are busy with your baby, try putting a heat bag or hot water bottle on the couch or the cat's bed as a replacement for sitting on your warm lap.

## Health

Always wash your hands thoroughly after cleaning litter trays and handling your cat.

Maintain good hygiene practices such as regular vaccinations, worming and flea treatment, and daily cleaning of litter boxes.

Talk to your doctor about the best way to minimise the risk of diseases or parasites being passed from pets to humans.



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[www.wearefamily.vic.gov.au](http://www.wearefamily.vic.gov.au)  
Customer Service 1800 000 776

