

Before the Baby

You can begin to help your cat adjust to the new addition before the baby arrives.

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When used together, the words cats and pregnancy are often followed by a discussion of toxoplasmosis. But rarely do expectant moms receive advice for another major concern: preparing their cats their first babies for a new addition to the household.

Plan for ChangePets get used to being the center of attention, so it makes sense that they experience some jealousy when a new infant arrives.

Cats are creatures of habit, says Peter Weinstein, DVM, medical director of Veterinary Pet Insurance, the nations oldest and largest pet-insurance provider. Moving a food dish, changing foods, even changing litters can create a crisis. Adding a new baby with its new smells and sounds will definitely disturb kitty karma.

Working with a cat before the babys birth eases the transition and keeps the cat, new parents and infant safe and happy.

An often overlooked first step in preparing your cat for the babys arrival is taking it to the veterinarian for a routine health exam and vaccinations.

Have [your cat] get a complete check-up including blood tests, says Charlotte Reed, a pet expert and owner of Two Dogs & A Goat Inc., a pet care service in New York. Make sure [your cat] is flea- and worm-free. Reed also recommends having your veterinarian thoroughly groom your cat and trim its nails. If your cat is not already spayed or neutered, get this surgery performed sterilized pets generally have fewer health problems and are calmer and less likely to bite.

Time TransitionsThe expectant mother should gradually accustom her cat to spending less time with her. Suddenly ignoring or isolating your cat after the baby arrives may make it feel stressed. Reed recommends limiting interaction to a certain time of day early in the pregnancy.

Establish a playtime for him or her that does not detract from baby time, Reed says.