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Getting the cats ready for a stork's delivery

Congratulations on having a baby! We truly hope the experience is a great one for your family! With a few simple steps we can help make sure that the transition goes as smooth as possible for the felines in the house as well. It is important to help manage their stress because their entire environment is about to completely change.



Start by making sure your cats have a place to retreat, preferably up high. Cat trees or shelving can aid in this. We purchased a large cat tree off group on a few weeks before our daughter was born. While assembling the furniture for her room, we assembled the cat tree as well. The cats seemed to appreciate their gift from the baby immediately. Consider using Feliway, Zylkene, and Calm diet starting a few weeks before the baby is due. Feliway is a pheromone that helps reduce stress in cats. It does not work in every cat however I have noticed less cat to cat fighting when we use it. You can find out more information at <http://www.feliway.com/us/>. Zylkene is a milk casein supplement that helps reduce anxiety. You can find out more information at

<https://www.vetoquinolusa.com/products/zylkene>. The Calm diet is a veterinary prescription diet by Royal Canin with tryptophan and casein. Think of having a large turkey dinner and a warm glass of milk. In some cats it helps them calm down. My cats tend to vomit whenever they are stressed and when we used this diet the vomiting almost ceased to exist.

The two most important aspects of a smooth transition happen after the birth of the baby. Whoever is not stuck in a hospital bed needs to come home and bring home a few of the blankets that are with the baby for the cats to smell. Bring home 1 per cat and just leave them spread throughout the living space.

The second important tip is when everyone comes home. Please make sure the person who did not come home does not hold the baby when entering. The cats missed you, do not start the jealously immediately. Have some quality kitty snuggle time if possible.

Try to spend some dedicated time to the cats everyday. Include the cats as much as possible. Whenever I was breastfeeding, my orange cat would lay on the other side of my daughter across my lap. The bond my daughter has created with our cats is truly amazing and I wish nothing but the same for you!



Babies and cats

Do cats really suffocate babies in their cribs? Is cat scratch fever something to be concerned with in babies? What else should we be worried about?

There are a lot of concerns new parents have with their friendly felines. Let's talk and dive into what is fact and fiction.

Cats do not suffocate infants, many like to snuggle but they do not suffocate them. With the current information on SIDS, there should be nothing in the crib until the baby is over 1 year besides the baby. This includes the cat. Additionally, cats should never be with an infant without supervision, including while the baby is asleep.

Cat Scratch Fever or *Bartonella henselae* can be an important zoonotic disease meaning transmissible from animals to people in immunocompromised individuals like babies. The infection is spread by bite or scratch which then swells and blisters. In general, most people do not have clinical signs and fight off the infection. Patients that are immune compromised become lethargic, febrile and it can become severe causing encephalopathy.



There is not a documented case of a cat on monthly flea prevention spreading *Bartonella*. Besides for preventing fleas, most monthly flea prevention also prevents hookworms and roundworms. These worms are zoonotic as well so it is important for families with small children to keep their cats on monthly flea prevention year round.

Other important aspects to consider are placement of the food and litter box. These need to continue to be safe places for the cats. Some people put up gates to keep the kids out. Besides issues with kids getting in the litter box, pet food is a great size for a baby to choke on.

Having a family pet helps teach children not only the compassion and responsibility of taking care of another living being, but also the love and acceptance many pets provide. Pets enhance our lives, no matter what the age.

