



Congratulations from Dogs&Storks!

Couples often choose to test-run their parenting skills with a dog prior to beginning their human family. Once a new baby is on the way, expecting parents may experience mixed feelings, questions, or concerns about raising dogs and kids together. Dogs&Storks exists to support families as they learn how to safely include their dog in the new family dynamics. Below are answers to questions many families have shared.

Does my dog know that I am pregnant?

Pregnancy brings many changes for expecting moms, both physically and emotionally. Changes in one's scent, posture, and moods are normal parts of pregnancy. Dogs are experts in observing and recognizing these subtle changes. Some dogs are more observant than others and might react to these subtle changes an expecting mom is experiencing.

What reactions might my dog have to my pregnancy?

Reactions can vary from increased attention-seeking behaviors to aggression. Because of the postural changes in pregnant women, some dogs may view their person as more vulnerable or in need of protection. Women might not walk as steadily, and that can be scary for some dogs. It is important to keep in mind that changes in posture and overall appearance can trigger different and unusual responses in some dogs.

What can I do about any negative reactions I see in my dog?

Obedience and leadership play a huge role in keeping the balance during unavoidable changes. Dogs are most comfortable when they know what is expected, and understand exactly what you would like them to do. If your dog is demonstrating any negative or uncertain behavior, refer back to your basic commands and training exercises to provide them with focus and structure. Practicing basic obedience is essential during times of change and transition. Leadership is also very important. Dogs can relax when they know their humans are in control and can take care of things. If your dog is used to being "pushy" or getting attention on demand, he or she may have a more challenging time adjusting during times you are preoccupied or tired.

It is no secret that pregnancy or the adoption process leads to an emotional roller-coaster for all family members – including the family dog! Stress that is good or bad takes a toll on energy and mood. This is a great time for families to learn to read their dogs' stress cues and subtle signals. It is also important to think ahead and plan how to handle the stressful times once the baby arrives. Planning ahead and learning the subtle body language that dogs offer when stressed is the best way to increase success as the family grows.

Hiring a professional dog behavior consultant or trainer can greatly decrease stress, prevent problems, and eliminate unwanted behaviors that may present in times of stress and change.

Please see our Presenter/advisor list or call for a referral.



Five great ways to prepare for life with baby!

1. Identify and decrease attention-seeking behaviors such as pawing, barking, or jumping.
2. Become familiar with the subtle signals and body language of dogs.
3. Begin a baby-friendly, flexible routine of feeding and activities – and include your dog! Be sure to take these opportunities to practice obedience skills.
4. Role-play with a doll & baby equipment to help gradually expose your dog to these new and exciting items. Reward calm and desired behavior.
5. Identify and begin to use designated “dog zone/s” such as a gated or closed room, outside, a kennel or crate, etc. If you have multiple dogs get them used to being apart from one another, too.

Resources

Dogs&Storks Online! Visit www.dogsandstorks.com, your source for Dogs&Storks Workshops, Podcasts, and DVDs

Books

Parenting with Pets by Christine Hamer and Margaret Hevel
Living with Kids & Dogs... Without Losing Your Mind by Colleen Pelar
Kids & Dogs by Ruth Weston & Dr. Catriona Ross

Baby Sounds CD

Terry Ryan’s *Sounds Good Series* located at www.legacycanine.com