



Cats & Kids

A Yorkshire Cat Rescue Guide

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There are many varied opinions surrounding the topic of cats living with children and babies. Every year, countless cats are surrendered to shelters because a new baby has arrived and the parents worry about the risk the cat poses to the child. However, these risks are very few and these can easily be managed. Children who grow up with cats have been found to have fewer incidents of allergies and asthma, have a great opportunity to learn about responsible pet ownership and will grow up with a furry friend.

Pregnancy

There is a risk to the unborn child from Toxoplasmosis. Although there are other more common ways to catch toxoplasmosis (for example from meat that hasn't been cooked properly) it is possible to catch it from cat faeces. For this reason it is advisable to have your partner clean litter trays during your pregnancy. If this is not possible, use rubber gloves and try to avoid inhaling any dust from litter trays. It takes between 24 and 48 hours for the cysts to become infective, so daily cleaning of the litter tray will almost entirely eliminate the risk of infection. It is perfectly safe for pregnant women to co-exist with their family cat as long as these precautions are taken.

Safety for the baby

It's common for new parents to be worried about their baby's safety but cats do not pose a risk to babies if a few precautions are made. Firstly do not worry about the cat suffocating the baby this is a myth that unfortunately still persists. Cats may jump into a baby's cot but this is because this is a warm and cosy place to sleep. The cat still may accidentally stand on or scratch the baby so cats should be kept out of the cot. If your cat is jumping into the cot keep the cat out of the baby's room or fit a net onto the cot. Nets are made to keep insects out but will act as a deterrent for a cat jumping in.

Cats can scratch but most of the time the cat will keep out of the way of a baby. Slowly introduce the baby to the cat, you can let the cat smell the baby's bedding first and then show the cat the baby in your arms. Supervise the interactions between the cat and the baby interactions and to be absolutely certain of your baby's safety never leave the baby alone with the cat.

When your baby becomes a child

As your baby grows older, teach him to be gentle with the cats as most scratches come from cats defending themselves. When he starts to reach out to grab the cats' tails, teach him how to pet the cats nicely. Also teach him not to bother the cats when they're eating or sleeping, and not to hold them when they want to run away. And while a cat is not likely to lash out in jealousy, give your cat plenty of attention to keep him happy and healthy too.

When your baby begins crawling and walking make sure that the litter tray and food bowl are out of their reach, either in another room or up somewhere high. It is important to make sure your cat's flea and worm treatments are all up-to-date. If

possible use a flea treatment that is natural or make sure the child doesn't touch a cat that has had a spot-on flea/worm treatment for 24 hours after the treatment.



Bella and Pippa. Two friends who found each other at Yorkshire Cat Rescue

Keeping your cat happy

Most cats will just ignore babies but if they are feeling worried about the changes that are happening in the house they may become anxious and stressed and may even resort to spraying as all the smells in the house have changed. Try to keep to the same routines with the cat, such as feeding, to help him feel reassured. You can also play tapes of baby noises before the birth to get the cat used to the changes that are coming. If the cat is very stressed keep the cat apart from the baby but give the cat the baby's bedding to smell so he becomes more accustomed to the new arrival in the house. You can also use plug-in hormone diffusers eg Feliway™ which can help some cats deal with changes that are making them anxious. Try to find some time to give your cat plenty of attention once the baby has fallen asleep, remember - stroking cats is a great stress relief for new parents too.