

What is the 'We Are Family' Program'?

The program offers a guide to nurturing the child and pet relationship from pregnancy to preschool years. The program is available through hospital maternity services and in early childhood centres throughout NSW.

It targets expectant parents and parents with young children teaching them how to live safely with dogs.

The program has been introduced into antenatal education programs and taught by antenatal educators in hospitals and by nurses in early childhood centres. A free information booklet is given to all participating families. The 'We Are Family' information booklet is available for download at: www.wearefamily.nsw.gov.au

Why do I need to know about pet safety?

Australia has one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the world. Most dog attacks involve children in the 0-8 age range and a high number of these attacks occur in the home environment where children are bitten by their own dog or one known to them.

Educating children and their families ensures the child-pet relationship is not only physically and emotionally rewarding but also a safe one as well.

What do parents learn in this program?

The 'We Are Family' program teaches families how to:

- prepare pets and the home environment for the arrival of a baby
- actively supervise all interaction between pets and children
- separate pets and children safely if parents cannot actively supervise them

The complimentary booklet is divided up into a number of chapters relevant to different development milestones:

Preparation:

This section looks at what needs to be considered when preparing the home environment and considering your pet's behaviour.

The first six months:

This section looks at introducing the baby to your pets, active supervision and secure separation.

Baby on the move:

This section looks at how to supervise or separate, avoiding inappropriate behaviours, avoiding risks and the importance of modelling behaviours.

Understanding our dogs and cats:

This section looks at dog and cat body language; recognising the warning signs our pets give us.

Zoonoses:

This section looks at a range of diseases which can be passed from pets to the unborn baby and how to avoid them.

Pet planner checklist:

This is a checklist with a range of helpful hints and activities parents may wish to work through prior to the baby's arrival. It includes hints on:

- spending time with your pets
- the home environment
- behaviour modification
- when baby comes home

Who teaches this education program?

The Program is delivered by antenatal educators and nurses who are provided with ongoing support and professional development. Hospitals are encouraged to distribute the complimentary 'We Are Family' booklet so expectant families can adequately prepare their pets for the baby's arrival.

How much does this education program cost?

The program is provided free-of-charge to hospitals, early childhood centres and program participants.