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The Home  
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## Cats & Young Children How to Minimize the Eventual Nightmares

by Louie Delaware

As with any pet, a young child will want to interact and play with them, and vice versa. With a cat, this brings up new challenges. Bites and scratches are only part of the problem. Below is a list of tips as to how to avoid some of the problems with cats.

- ◆ Disease & Illnesses – Although it does not happen too often, children can get sick from a cat. Parasites like roundworms or hookworms, bacteria like bartonellosis (cat scratch fever) or rabies, or fungus like ringworm can be transferred from a cat to a child. And the parasite causing toxoplasmosis can cause problems for pregnant women and children. The best thing to do is to have your cat annually checked for these illnesses and ensure that their inoculations are always current, and then avoid the feces of cats. And always wash your hands after petting or handling a cat or its litter box.
- ◆ Don't allow a cat to lick the face of a child, especially around the mouth, nose or eyes.
- ◆ Keep the litter box away from a child. Nobody wants to see a child walking around with a clump of litter in their hands. And don't allow a child to have access to cat food as it is easy for a child to put some in their mouth and choke on it. Gates work well on this front. Cat doors also work, but sometimes they are big enough to allow a child to crawl through, and some people dread the idea of cutting into a perfectly good door. Another option is to use a chain attached to a locking hook and eye to prevent a door from opening too much (about 3-4 inches) and then a piece of foam that goes over the door to prevent it from closing. This way your cat can have free access to the litter box and their food, but you child won't.
- ◆ Closely supervise your child's interaction with your cat, and vice versa. Tail and ear pulls happen frequently and the cat's response will be to unleash their claws. And properly treat any scratches or bites.
- ◆ Don't allow a cat to sleep with a child, especially an infant or toddler. It is easy for a cat to curl up in front of the child's face and possibly suffocate them. If this proves to be problem, you can install a screen tent over the crib to prevent the cat from jumping in.
- ◆ If you have a sandbox, consider installing a cover to prevent cats (and other outdoor animals) from using it.

Sometimes child safety and cat's in a home are mutually exclusive items. But you can do a lot to make both of their lives better and safer by using some common sense.

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