

5 secrets to a well-adjusted new kitten

Socializing your sleek new bundle of joy is something you can do with your veterinarian's help. Start here.

Did you know that kittens learn and develop a big part of their adult personality by 16 weeks of age? It's true, and if you want a happy cat that takes life in a joyous stride, the clock is ticking. The positive (or negative) associations that young cats develop during this critical stage of brain development can last a lifetime ... for better or worse. So let's make it better!

Note: Don't force things! Make sure these exposures are done in a way that's comfortable for the kitten. Don't keep exposing a kitten to a new experience if the cat is scared. Talk to your veterinarian for guidance.

1. Handle your kitten—literally

Make a point to touch your kitten all over. Don't ever be forceful or push to the point of struggle. Just touch and hold gently and reward her acceptance with a special treat or gentle pet (kittens love to be stroked on both sides of their faces—maybe that's all the reward you'll need). Remember, over time, you'll need to be able to trim toe nails, clean ears and brush teeth. If your new kitten actually *enjoys* these rituals, life is better for you both.

2. Socialize with your kitten

Let your kitten meet people of all shapes, sizes and mannerisms to learn there's nothing to fear from people of all kinds. Introduce children, men and women, and even people with hats or costumes—Halloween comes around once a year. Don't forget the treats to make "scary" fun! Warn everyone to go slowly and speak softly, because kittens can be cautious by nature.

3. Keep the peace (of mind)

Let's face it, your cat is going to be sick or hurt at some point in his life, maybe starting with a spay or neuter surgery. You can make this better by training early not to fear the cat carrier. Buy one that you like too, because you need to keep it where you both can see it and think of it as an everyday thing. Leave it in the cat's favorite area with the door open, and hide treats inside or even feed

meals in there. Anything you can do to create a positive association with the carrier is a step in the right direction.

The best carriers are those with rigid sides and that open on the top as well as the front. That way, your kitten can feel safe in a hospital exam room while your veterinarian does a physical examination right inside the carrier. Your veterinary team will love you, and your kitten (and eventually grownup cat) won't be as freaked out when she needs to ride in her carrier for any reason.



These cats can totally room free in their own cat car. If they're in yours, however, put them in a cat carrier for their safety and yours.

4. Adventure with your kitten

You and your cat will experience all life has to offer together, but the experiences won't be as fun if your cat is afraid or difficult to handle. Take your kitten wherever you can for exposure to new places. Visit your veterinarian on a day just for a visit—and some friendly treats. And don't forget to make her carrier into a cat nirvana, because that's the way you can keep travel with her the safest.

Science shows that it's easier for brains to remember bad experiences than good ones, so make sure your foundation for your kitten's brain is filled with terrific associations. You can avoid big problems in the future and, let's face it, handling and spending time with your kitten is a ton of fun!

How to introduce new cats to your home

BY MATT WILDMAN, CAT BEHAVIORIST

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Meredith Lee/The HSUS

Bringing a new cat into your home is a big deal for your resident cat(s). Why? Because your cats are likely to initially view the new cat as a threat as opposed to a friend. That's not an ideal way to start a relationship, but that's the reality with cats. However, there is good news! By following these guidelines, your new cat is likely to be accepted by your current cat(s) and there will at least be peaceful coexistence and, ideally, bonding.

Consider your current cat's needs.

How much energy do they have?

It's a good idea to adopt a cat around the same age and/or who has a similar energy

level. For example, it may seem like your 10-year-old cat would benefit from the excitement a kitten brings into the home, but it's more likely your older cat will be consistently bothered by the kitten who wants to play all the time.

What's their experience with other cats?

If your cat has never been around other cats except when they were a kitten, it may take them awhile to adjust to a new cat in the home. Ideally, the new cat is known to enjoy the company of other cats as this will likely make the introduction process easier.

Go slow.

Introducing cats should be a slow process. In fact, the slower the process, the better chance of a successful introduction. "Slow" means at the pace of the cat who is showing the most signs of stress. This may be the new cat and/or the resident cat(s). This introduction may be a matter of days, weeks or months—it's up to the cat. It may be tempting to rush the process, but patience will make everyone in the household (people and cats) much happier in the long run. Here's how to do a successful introduction:

Step 1: Separate the cats

Your new cat should be kept in a single room during the initial stages of this introduction process. This is important for both the new cat (so they can begin to feel comfortable in their new territory) and for the resident cat (so they can adjust to the new cat's presence in the home). To set everyone up for success, ideally the new cat is kept in a room that the resident cat doesn't spend all that much time in. (This may not be possible in a small apartment.) For example, if your resident cat enjoys sleeping in your bedroom, ideally the new cat is kept in a room other than your bedroom.

During this separation period, you can switch the cats' bedding so that they get

used to each other's scent. It's also important that all the cats are getting enough daily play time as this will help reduce their stress.

Do not move on to any further steps until both the new and the resident cat are showing calm and relaxed behavior. The new cat should be confidently exploring their room and showing social behavior with the people in the home. The resident cat should be acting as they always did prior to the new cat's arrival. Only move on when you reach this point.

Step 2: Create positive associations

At this point, you have two or more cats who may be curious about each other, based on their smell, but also fearful and/or stressed by the presence of the other. The goal in this step is to show the cats that good things (like treats) happen when they see each other, to create positive associations.

First, identify a food (other than their regular food) or treat that each cat loves. Moving forward, they are only going to get this treat in the presence of the other cat. Good things can also be play time or even grooming if the cat(s) enjoys being brushed.

The cats should not be directly interacting at this stage. Instead they should be separated by a tall, sturdy baby gate (at least 36" high) in the doorway of the new cat's room. Neither cat should be picked up and forced to see the other. You can encourage the resident cat to come near the baby gate using treats or play, but again, the pace of this introduction is determined by the cats.

Here are two examples of how to create positive associations using the baby gate (the first would take place before the second):

EXAMPLE ONE

Cover the baby gate with a sheet so the cats can't see each other. Remove the sheet

for a moment or two until the cats see each other and, in an upbeat tone, say, “Happy cats!” (or anything else you’d rather say) and toss them both a treat. Then immediately cover the baby gate with the sheet. This is easier to do if there is a second person, but can be done with one person. Repeat this activity five to 10 times in a row a few times a day. (It will only take a few minutes each time.) The key to this process is keeping the interactions very brief and positive. Don’t wait for one of the cats to show stress; instead end the interaction on a positive note before any signs of stress.

EXAMPLE TWO

With a toy in each hand (or better yet, a second person on one side of the baby gate and you on the other), engage the cats in interactive play using a separate toy for each cat. Ideal toys are a fishing rod toy which has a rod with a long string and feathers attached or a cat laser light. Keep the play sessions short. Always stop the play on a good note (before there are any signs of stress) and reward the cats with a treat. If things are going well, gradually increase the amount of time you play with them.

When you see positive indications that show the cats are developing comfort with each other, you can increase the amount of time the cats see each other as well as decrease the distance that you are tossing the treats. These signs include:

- Eating the treats in the presence of the other cat.

- Playing with a toy in the presence of the other cat.

- Ignoring each other and going about their own business on opposite sides of the baby gate.

- Touching noses through the gate, playing footsies under the gate and/or rubbing their bodies against the gate.

When you see indications that one or more of the cats is stressed, go slower with the process. If one or more cats shows a particularly high level of stress, than go

back a step. It's not a set-back; it just means that the process is going to take longer than you initially thought. These signs include:

Consistent hissing or growling towards the other cat. A hiss here or there is not a concern, so long as the cat is otherwise showing some positive indications as well.

Distancing themselves so they don't see the other. For the new cat, this may mean hiding in their room. For the resident cat, this may mean running to another room.

Stressed body language. In particular, look for a swishing tail, ears flattened back against the head or turned sideways, hair on their back is raised, crouching or slinking away.

Step 3: Supervised time together

By this point, the cats are increasingly comfortable with each other, but have not yet directly interacted. Now you can give them supervised time together without the baby gate. Reward them with treats for any positive or neutral interactions. At the slightest indication of a negative interaction (like stalking, chasing or pouncing) distract and redirect the cats with a toy. Aim to end the interaction on a positive note, then gradually extend the amount of time that you allow the cats to be in the same area under close supervision.

When the cats have repeatedly, over at least several days if not weeks, had positive or neutral interactions without showing signs of stress, they are ready for unsupervised time together.

Set the cats up for a positive relationship.

The last part of a successful introduction is making sure that the home environment has enough of everything for every cat, i.e. enough litter boxes, scratching posts, water bowls, food bowls, hiding spaces, comfortable resting

spaces, toys and human attention so that the cats do not feel in competition for any of these resources.

It's also important that there be enough high resting spaces for the cats (any object from a few inches off the floor to a few inches from the ceiling). Cats love to perch and this helps them to feel safe in the home. Also, high resting spaces increase the amount of territory in the home, which makes peaceful coexistence among cats more likely.

A fluffy grey and white cat is sitting on a pile of trash, including plastic bottles, paper, and other debris. The background is dark and textured.

5 cat items to toss right now

We all want to do the best we can by our kitties. But did you know some of the cat accessories you currently own might be better off in the trash? Read on to learn more.

1. Scratched-up litter boxes

Most litter boxes are made of plastic. One bad thing about plastic? It scratches. Your cat paws at the bottom of her box every time she uses it. The tiny scratches in the floor of the box may trap odor and germs. The next time you clean her box, check it for micro-scratches too. If you find some, it may be time for a new litter box.

2. Plastic bowls

Plastic is naturally greasy and easily scratched when it is a feeding dish also. Cats can suffer from feline acne, and it's possible that the greasiness of plastic bowls contributes to oil buildup and clogged pores on your cat's chin and face. Perhaps better not to chance it because it is difficult for your cat to sufficiently clean her chin anyway. Ditch the plastic bowls and use ceramic or stainless steel instead.

3. Toys in disrepair or covered in real fur

Toys that are damaged can be dangerous if portions are swallowed. And tiny, fur-covered mice can be a major hazard for cats. Cats are motivated by their strong prey instincts to chase and hunt the toy, and it's not a large leap to eat the toy if it is covered in real rabbit or mouse

fur. Many cats have ended up on a surgery table because of these "harmless" fake mice. Don't take a chance. If you have a tiny toy that is covered with real fur, throw it out!

4. Dull nail trimmers

Cats' claws may be sharp, but they are fragile, too, especially if you try to trim them with dull nail trimmers. Unless the blade is sharp, it will crush and fracture the nail and this is not comfortable for your cat. Holding still for you to trim the nails is hard enough! Don't make it twice as difficult and uncomfortable. Keep your trimmer sharp by changing the blade or replacing the trimmer regularly.

5. Expired or inappropriate medications

It might be tempting to save every medication you get for your cat, just in case you ever need it, but don't do it! Medications are prescribed for the specific cat and the specific problem at that time and might not be safe or effective for something else. Just because you are sure it is the same problem, it is much better to ask your veterinarian and be safe. Inappropriate medications are not worth the risk and expired medications can be downright toxic.

The 10 most-searched questions about cats

We know you've "Googled" when it comes to your pet. In fact, Google released the 10 most-searched questions pet owners asked about their cats last year. So, instead of leaving the answers to a Google algorithm, here are some veterinary experts to answer your queries so you can get to the bottom of questions like, "Why do cats like boxes?"

Google is a great tool, but if you ever have a question regarding your pet, never hesitate to contact us. We're here to answer the serious to merely curious questions—we're happy to do it! In the meantime, see how John Ciribassi, DVM, DACVB, Elizabeth Colleran, DVM, DAVBP (feline practice) and Ernie Ward, DVM, answer your most pressing questions about Fluffy.



1. Why do cats purr?

>Purring occurs as a result of vibration of vocal cords due to neurological stimulation from brain activity. The purpose is uncertain but it does seem to be associated with pleasurable activity. However, cats are also known to purr

when ill or injured, which lead some to believe that the frequency of the vibration can be associated with greater healing. Purring also is reinforcing for people and therefore can increase the amount of petting. —*Dr. Ciribassi*

>Cats generally purr when in contact with someone; a favored owner stroking, nursing a kitten, or greeting a familiar partner-cat. Positive experiences also elicit purring, rolling or rubbing, being in a warm familiar environment or about to fall peacefully asleep. —*Dr. Colleran*

2. How long do cats live?

>Average life span in cats is around 15 years. This can vary widely depending on the health of the cat, nutrition and preventive care. We have had cats in our practice live to 22 years. —*Dr. Ciribassi*

>Outdoor cats often live shorter lives than indoor. Being overweight or obese shortens life by 1 to 2.5 years on average. Regular health care, physical

examinations, parasite prevention and vaccinations provide protection against threats to life and health.—*Dr. Colleran*

>House cats can expect to live 15 to 20 years, with some reaching 25. Advances in preventing kitten-hood diseases such as distemper and feline leukemia, heartworms and other parasites, are key in extending longevity, along with better diets. Indoor cats face fewer threats from predators and trauma, but indoor cats also are facing an obesity epidemic leading to skyrocketing rates of diabetes. —*Dr. Ward*



3. Why do cats knead?

>Kneading behavior in cats is a reflection of instinctual behavior from kittenhood. Kittens knead the mammary glands of the queen to stimulate milk production. I see this in older kittens and cats when they are content and are attempting to solicit attention. —*Dr. Ciribassi*

>Cats knead for two reasons. While settling down to rest, some cats will knead soft places as if to prepare it to lie comfortably. This may be from a time when vegetation would be knocked down to make a safe sleeping place. Kittens knead the queen to help with milk release when nursing. —*Dr. Colleran*

>One theory is kneading cats are marking territory with special scent glands located in the paws. Another is that kneading is a lingering behavior from suckling. Finally, kneading may be a form of stretching or it just plain feels good. —*Dr. Ward*



4. Why do cats sleep so much?

>Often they appear to be asleep but are instantly awakened; this type of sleep varies with another deeper one. They tend to sleep in short increments of 10 to 30 minutes, so they are probably not sleeping as much as we think.

—*Dr. Colleran*

>Cats sleep an average of 16 to 18 hours a day. One reason is energy conservation. Cats use a special form of sugar to fuel their short bursts of activity. It takes a while to restore this energy so cats are careful when and why they rush into action. Cats are most active at dawn and dusk, so to balance their instinct and our human schedules, they end up taking lots of "cat naps." —*Dr. Ward*



5. Why do cats have whiskers?



>They are very sensitive sense organs and tell a cat a lot about his position in space and what is going on around him. They appear to be particularly useful in low light and darkness, times when other organs cannot collect as much information.—*Dr. Colleran*

>Whiskers are highly sensitive and

help inform the cat about surrounding objects, air movements and more. Whiskers may also be used to gauge whether a cat can slip into a tight space. You can also tell if a cat is nervous or scared if the whiskers are pointing forward at a potential threat. Whatever you do, don't trim or pluck whiskers because they serve an important information source for cats. —*Dr. Ward*

6. What does catnip do to cats?



>Catnip is an herb. About half of cats are genetically likely to respond to active oil in catnip. It is not certain what part of the brain is stimulated by this ingredient but it is not harmful and can be used to help increase use of items like scratching posts. Many treats have

this to help stimulate play. —*Dr. Ciribassi*

>The aroma of catnip in cats is thought to be quite pleasurable. It has no other significance and seems to be a genetic accident. It is an autosomal dominant trait, so not all cats are sensitive. —*Dr. Colleran*

7. Why do cats hate water?



>There are many types and breeds of cats that are comfortable around or in water. Many cats will fish for food. The Turkish Van and Maine Coon seem to like water—even being immersed in it. For those that don't like it, it may be related to the way their fur is constructed. It isn't made for drenching

and can become quite heavy when it is. —*Dr. Colleran*

8. Why do cats eat grass?

>One theory is that it is an evolutionary adaption to intestinal parasites and may serve as a purging mechanism. The taste of sweet moist grass may help to explain it as well as there are some observers who think it is more common with new spring grass. —*Dr. Colleran*

>Most veterinarians agree grass eating seems to be a way

for cats to relieve gastrointestinal (GI) symptoms, parasites or possibly infections. Another theory is that cats are craving micronutrients found in leafy plants. Finally, cats may eat grass simply because they like it. It's important to note some cats suffering from inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) may be misdiagnosed as "grass eaters." —*Dr. Ward*



9. Why do cats like boxes?

>Cats like to hide and yet be able to see what is going on around them. The opening gives them the view and the sides of the box can protect them from being seen by predators. Remember cats are today the same cats they were 10,000 years ago when they hunted and avoided predators to survive. —*Dr. Colleran*



10. What is a group of cats called?

>It is called a clowder or a glaring. —*Dr. Ciribassi*

>A group of related kittens is a litter. A few litters are a kindle. —*Dr. Colleran*

>Clowder originates in Middle English from the term "clotter," which meant, "to huddle together." It also has roots in "clutter" which is what my clowder creates in my house. —*Dr. Ward*



Dr. John Ciribassi, DVM, DACVB, founded the animal behavior specialty practice Chicagoland Veterinary Behavior Consultants located in Buffalo Grove, Bensenville and Chicago, Illinois. Ciribassi is a board certified veterinary behaviorist and has served as president of the Chicago Veterinary Medical Association as well as president of the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior (AVSAB).



Dr. Elizabeth Colleran, DVM, DAVBP (feline practice), is a veterinarian at Chico Hospital for Cats in Chico, California. Dr. Colleran graduated from Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine in 1990 and earned a Masters of Science in Animals and Public Policy at Tufts in 1996. In 2011, she was the president of the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP). She is a Diplomate of the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners, Specialty in Feline Practice. Dr. Colleran speaks at major conferences around the country.



Dr. Ernie Ward, DVM, a veterinarian, author, speaker and media personality, has dedicated his life and career to promoting a healthier lifestyle for people and pets. Known as "America's Pet Advocate," Ward founded the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention (APOPP) in 2005. He lives with his wife and daughters in coastal North Carolina where he began his career with his clinic, Seaside Animal Care, in 1993. He's also a certified personal trainer and USA Triathlon certified coach.



SPAYING or NEUTERING *your cat*



Part of being conscientious cat owner is considering the importance of spaying or neutering your feline friend. Read on for more info and the truth behind some common myths.

Besides preventing unwanted litters, spaying or neutering your cat helps prevent many life-threatening diseases and can head off some irritating behaviors.

Spaying

Although it's commonly referred to as a spay, this surgery is actually a complete ovariectomy, or the removal of both ovaries and the uterus. Spayed cats are at much lower risk for ovarian cancers and cysts, mammary gland tumors, and uterine infections.

Unspayed females are also more likely to exhibit inappropriate urine marking during their heat cycles—not to mention their aggravating wailing and crying to be let outside. The urge to reproduce is amazingly powerful in cats. Those of us who have endured the company of a cat in heat know all too well the origin of the term caterwauling!

Neutering

Neutering is the removal of both testicles. It sounds worse than it is—and no, he won't miss them! Neutered males are less susceptible to prostate disease and testicular cancer.

Castrated male cats are often more affectionate and people-oriented, and neutering your cat usually keeps

him from spraying his objectionably strong-smelling urine in your home to mark his territory. Neutered males are also less likely to wander from home, so neuter your pet before his heart leads him into the path of an oncoming car.

Common myths

Often people worry that their spayed or neutered pet will get fat. However, the aging process probably affects weight gain more than anything—as many of us are painfully aware from our human experience. It's true that lowered hormone levels may decrease your pet's activity. The key to this problem is simple—give your pet less food and more exercise.

It's also a myth that females need to complete a heat cycle before being spayed. There is no medical reason for this old wives' tale. In fact, the fewer heat cycles your pet goes through before getting spayed, the better her protection against mammary cancer. Because cats are very efficient breeders, all it would take is her getting out once while in heat—and you'd have kittens.

Worried your male cat will lose his personality after neutering? Relax! If he loses anything, it will be his sexual impulses and the associated marking behavior.

Scratch that!

Use these tips to pick an appropriate scratching post to satisfy your cat's itch to scratch.

Pick the right post. Think about the places your cat scratches now. What's her preferred material? Scout out posts and coverings that mimic her favorite scratching surfaces, from sisal to cardboard to carpet-covered posts or even wood or leather.

Structure matters. Does your kitty crave vertical scratching surfaces or horizontal ones? Some cats will enjoy a mix of both.

How high? Does your cat stretch high and far above his head? He might like higher posts. Just be sure it's sturdy so it won't wobble, wobble or fall while you're cat's soothing his scratching urge.

Location matters. Just like real estate, where you place your scratching board counts. Your kitty craves your attention, so it's best to post her post in highly trafficked areas, where the family spends time together. This way her kitty "furniture" is on the scene, close to you—the one she loves best!





The perfect scratching post

Your feline friend deserves the best, right? That means his claws do too. Here's all you need to know to create the perfect environment for cat-scratching heaven.

Scratching is a normal behavior, and you should encourage it by creating places where you and your cat are both satisfied. That's why having the perfect scratching post is so important.

Cats need to be able to stretch to full height when they scratch. So look for a scratching post that is taller than your cat's length when he's stretched out. Commercial scratching posts tend to be made of sisal, but they can be made of wood, carpet or sisal textile material glued to wood.

Some cats like to scratch horizontally, too. Corrugated cardboard and scratch pads may help protect the carpeting. Always attach any scratcher to a heavy piece of wood. Stability is a really important factor—any scratcher that wobbles might be startling and may cause your cat to avoid the object. Make sure that the scratcher has a large and heavy enough base or is

secured to floor or wall so it offers plenty of resistance to enthusiastic claws.

The scratching surfaces need to be positioned in the most appealing places to scratch within the home. If the cat has already selected a location to scratch, move the scratching post to that location. Marking here may have some significance to your kitty, and you want to encourage your cat to scratch on the post—instead of your carpet or furniture.

Notice your cat's regular routes through the house and place scratching posts there. Some cats like to scratch first thing in the morning, on waking up. A scratching post near the sleeping place will be welcome.

Finally, remember to reward appropriate scratching with treats if you are trying to lure the cat to a particular site. Cats attracted by catnip may find that desirable.

It's NATURAL for Cats to Scratch!

Cats need to scratch and mark with their claws to:

- Stretch their body.
- Remove the worn layer of their nail.
- Maintain necessary claw motion used in hunting and climbing.
- Leave visible markers to establish their territory, especially if there is concern with other cats in the household or outdoors.

Best practices:

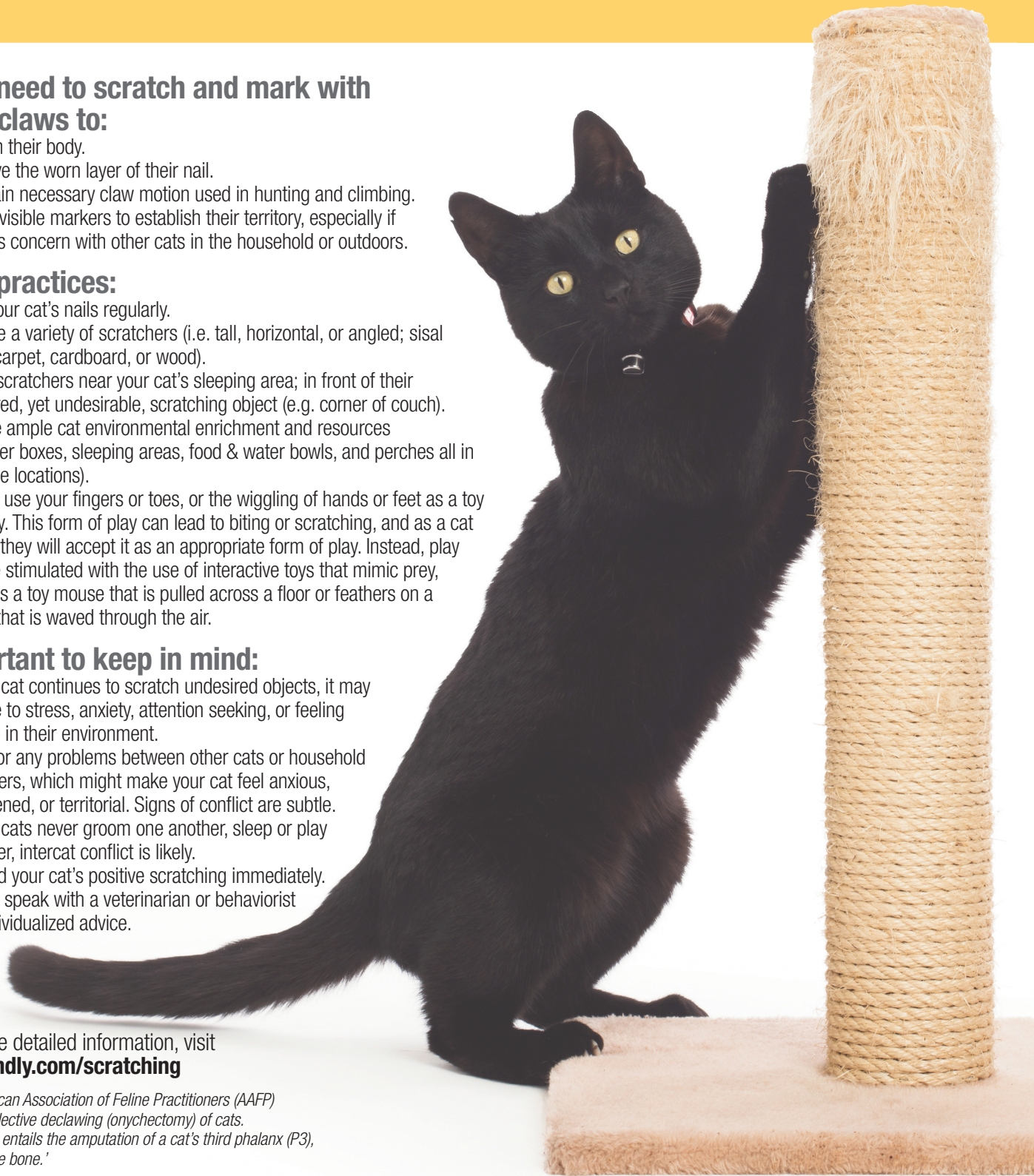
- Trim your cat's nails regularly.
- Provide a variety of scratchers (i.e. tall, horizontal, or angled; sisal rope, carpet, cardboard, or wood).
- Place scratchers near your cat's sleeping area; in front of their preferred, yet undesirable, scratching object (e.g. corner of couch).
- Ensure ample cat environmental enrichment and resources (i.e. litter boxes, sleeping areas, food & water bowls, and perches all in multiple locations).
- Do not use your fingers or toes, or the wiggling of hands or feet as a toy for play. This form of play can lead to biting or scratching, and as a cat grows they will accept it as an appropriate form of play. Instead, play can be stimulated with the use of interactive toys that mimic prey, such as a toy mouse that is pulled across a floor or feathers on a wand that is waved through the air.

Important to keep in mind:

- If your cat continues to scratch undesired objects, it may be due to stress, anxiety, attention seeking, or feeling unsafe in their environment.
- Look for any problems between other cats or household members, which might make your cat feel anxious, threatened, or territorial. Signs of conflict are subtle. If your cats never groom one another, sleep or play together, intercat conflict is likely.
- Reward your cat's positive scratching immediately.
- Please speak with a veterinarian or behaviorist for individualized advice.

For more detailed information, visit catfriendly.com/scratching

The American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) opposes elective declawing (onychectomy) of cats. Declawing entails the amputation of a cat's third phalanx (P3), or third 'toe bone.'



Alternatives to Declawing



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Alternatives to Declawing

WHAT IS DECLAWING?

Feline declawing is an elective and ethically controversial procedure, which is NOT medically necessary for cats in most instances. Declawing entails the amputation of a cat's third phalanx [P3], or third 'toe bone.' Unlike human nails, cats' claws are attached to the last bone in their toes. A comparison in human terms would be cutting off a person's finger at the last joint of each finger.

It is important to understand that scratching is normal behavior for cats, which has an inherent function. The primary reason cats scratch is to maintain the necessary claw motion used in hunting and climbing, as well as a means to stretch their body. Scratching serves to groom the front claws and leave markers of the cat's presence. A cat's claws grow in layers and scratching removes the worn outer layer to expose the new growth inside. Cat owners must therefore provide alternatives for cats such as suitable scratchers.

ALTERNATIVES TO DECLAWING

Scratching posts/pads

Provide your cat with suitable 'scratchers' where they can exhibit normal scratching behavior. Scratchers come in multiple styles and textures. It is important to experiment with a variety of textures and types of scratchers to determine which your cat prefers. Some examples include scratching posts or pads with sisal rope or rough fabric, cardboard boxes, and lumber or logs. Scratchers can be vertical or horizontal and there are even varieties that blend into your home decor.



The placement of scratchers is very important. Cats often stretch or scratch when they wake up so consider placing one near where your cat sleeps. It may also be effective to place a scratcher near or in front of a cat's preferred, yet undesirable, scratching object (e.g. corner of the couch). Kittens and cats can be trained to use scratchers by rewarding use of the scratcher with the cat's favorite treat. If the cat scratches elsewhere, they should be gently picked up, taken to the scratcher, and then rewarded. Cats should always be positively reinforced and never punished.



Regular claw trimming

Regularly trimming your cat's claws can prevent injury and damage to household items. Proper feline nail trimmers should be used to prevent splintering of the claws. The frequency of claw trimming will depend on your cat's lifestyle. Indoor cats, kittens, and older cats will need more regular nail trims, whereas outdoor cats may naturally wear down their nails requiring less frequent trimming. If possible, start trimming as kittens so they become comfortable with the process early on. If your cat does not like claw trimmings start slow, offer breaks, and make it a familiar routine. Ask your veterinarian for advice or a demonstration on trimming your cat's claws. Always trim claws in a calm environment and provide positive reinforcement. Proper training to scratch on appropriate surfaces, combined with nail care, can prevent damage in the home.



Temporary synthetic nail caps

These caps are glued over your cat's nails to help prevent human injury and damage to household items. The nail caps usually need to be re-applied every 4-6 weeks; therefore they may be a less desirable alternative to regular nail trimming, suitable scratchers, and environmental enrichment.

Synthetic facial pheromone sprays/diffusers

Continued scratching by cats may be related to stress, anxiety, attention seeking, or a perceived lack of security in their environment. Anxiety can also be intensified by punishment, thus driving the cat to increase scratching behaviors in the same or other undesirable locations in the home. Consider using synthetic facial pheromone sprays and/or diffusers to help relieve anxiety or stress. Apply a synthetic pheromone spray such as Feliway® on the objects or areas in your home where your cat has exhibited undesired scratching. Do so after cleaning with soap and water to remove the communication marking scents left by your cat's paws. Applying daily comforting pheromones can prevent your cat's need to mark these areas again. Feliway® should not be sprayed on the desired scratcher. If undesirable scratching occurs in several rooms, indicating a more generalized anxiety or stress, it is recommended to also plug-in a synthetic pheromone diffuser such as Feliway® to comfort your cat in their home environment.

Appropriate environmental enrichment

Providing your cat with an environment that is enriching is vital to teaching your cat to scratch on appropriate objects. Destructive scratching can occur in cats because their needs have not been fully met. Cats need the proper resources to perform their natural behaviors and have control over their social interactions. You can enhance your cat's health and well-being by ensuring all their needs are met in the home. The AAFP has a wealth of information for cat owners on environmental enrichment. Visit: www.catvets.com/environmental-needs.

For additional information, discuss declawing alternatives with your veterinary practice. Veterinarians can provide you with guidance and recommendations based on your individual cat and household environment.

You are an important member of your cat's healthcare team.
You are instrumental in helping with the success of
treatments and improved healthcare for your cat.

***For more information on declawing, declawing alternatives,
and claw trimming, visit: www.catvets.com/declawalternatives***

We wish to thank Ceva Animal Health for sponsoring this document.



www.catvets.com

How to exercise your cat

Talk to your friends who have dogs. Or maybe you have a canine family member yourself. Getting them to exercise? Pretty simple: Toss a ball, take a walk, hit the stairs. But cats? That's a little more difficult. You need to be creative and sometimes play a trick or two.

By keeping your cat active, you may be adding time to her life. Encouraging and maintaining mobility keeps a pet's weight in check and also provides mental stimulation. So try these exercises to promote a sound body and mind:

- Have feathers on a stick or laser pointers on hand for your cat to chase. Start with five minutes per day and work up to 15 minutes of active play time. This can be all at once or spread throughout the day. Cats are often more active at night, so try working a 15-minute exercise plan into your evening routine.

- Take your cat's daily food portion and divide it into several bowls placed around the house. Your cat will have to go from

room to room to find the food. If your cat is healthy enough, consider placing food dishes on elevated platforms that will require mental and physical challenge. Start this process by adding just one extra bowl so your cat gets used to the idea of "hunting" for food.

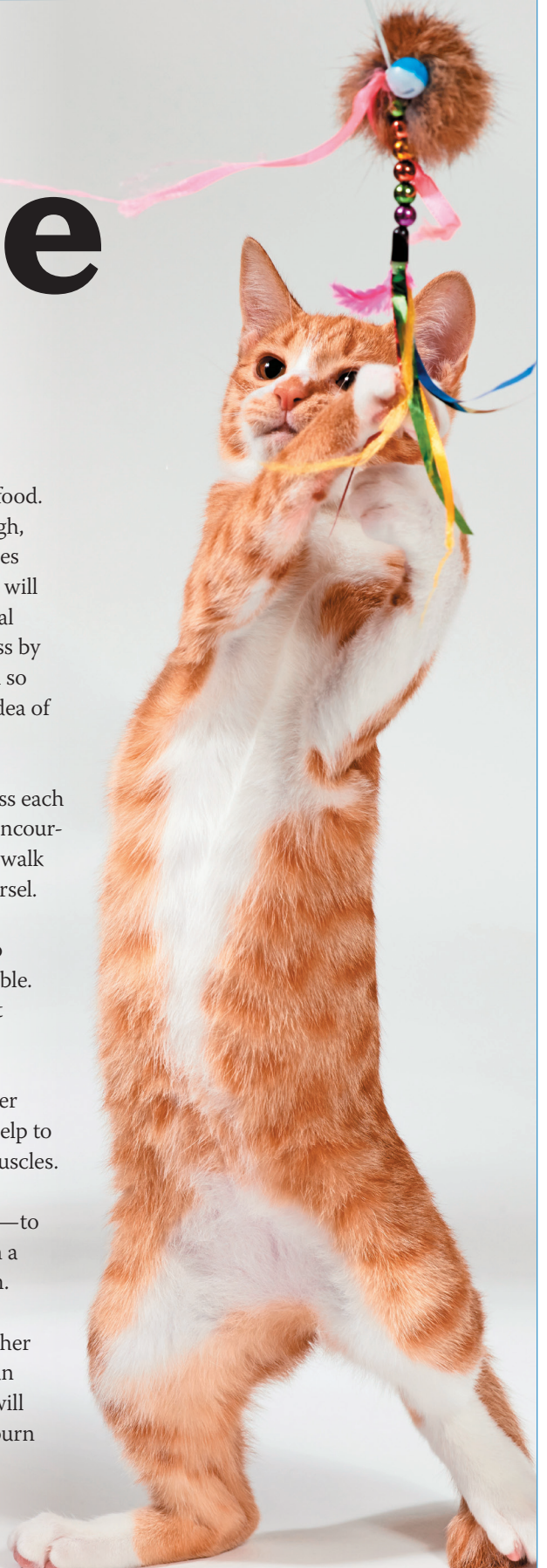
- During meal time, toss each kibble across the floor to encourage your cat to get up and walk to find and devour the morsel.

- Encourage your cat to play by keeping toys available. Change them up to keep it exciting.

- Have a cat tree or other apparatus to climb up to help to your cat strengthen her muscles.

- Use treats—sparingly—to get your cat to jump up on a chair and back down again.

- Consider adding another feline friend if your cat is an "only child" as many cats will play with each other and burn more calories.



Keeping Cats Indoors

What you can do to keep them *happy and healthy*

Our unique feline companions

In the wild, cats hunt for food, hide from predators (often by climbing), and defend their home territories. Indoors, these behaviors may look hostile (biting and scratching) or spiteful (climbing, spraying, marking), and we may not like them. The keys to enjoying cats in our lives are to provide acceptable outlets for their natural behaviors and reduce their exposure to threats.

Cats are unique in a number of ways

Cats do not have a daily sleep-wake cycle and may want to sleep or play at any hour of the day or night.

Dogs and primates (humans) are cats' natural predators. By understanding this, we can learn to "get along."

Cats are not a pack species such as dogs and humans. This makes them more independent and self-contained and also means they learn differently, which can put them at risk for conflict with others.

These checklists describe the indoor resources cats need to live happy and healthy lives. More extensive information is available at: indoorpet.osu.edu

When making changes, start with what is easiest!

What you can do to keep them *happy and healthy*

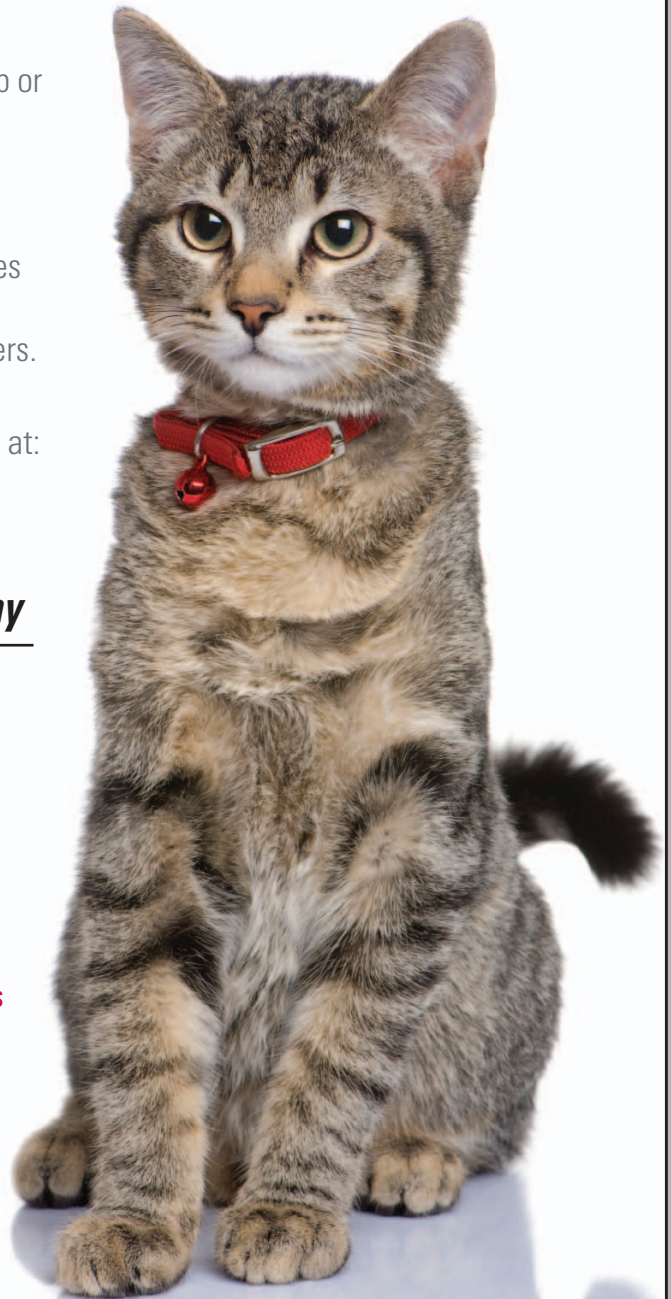


We developed this resource checklist to help you learn what indoor-housed cats need to enjoy their lives with you. Essential resources include:

- Fresh food and water
- Scratching and climbing structures
- Litter boxes
- Rest and relaxation, and safety
- Informed owners
- Play opportunities

Details on page 2

Because all cats are unique, we can tell what works for most cats, but not what will work for your cat. Please use these checklists to get you started, and then have fun exploring what works best for you, your cat, and your situation.



indoorpet.osu.edu

The Ohio State University Veterinary Medical Center
601 Vernon L. Tharp Street Columbus, OH 43210-1089

VETERINARY MEDICAL CENTER



Keeping Cats Indoors

What you can do to keep them *happy and healthy*

Fresh food and water

Give each cat his own food and water bowl in a safe, quiet place.

Some cats prefer different shaped bowls, some like running water, and some may not like the taste of some water. Offering alternatives will let your cat show what it likes.

Change food form (e.g., dry to canned) only when both the owner and cat want to. (see “ask the cat” section under informed owners)

Once you learn what food and water your cat likes best, don’t change without “asking” your cat first.

Litter boxes

Cats eliminate to fulfill a fundamental need. They also use eliminations as a way to mark their territory. Since your home is their territory, you can avoid elimination problems by providing an attractive litter box. There are four basic things to consider when setting up a litter box:

Litter box hygiene

The litter box must be scooped daily and washed weekly with mild dish detergent.

Litter box type and size

Litter boxes are available in a variety of sizes and shapes. Cats generally prefer large, uncovered litter boxes, about one and a half times the length of the cat. Research has shown that most cats prefer fine-grained, unscented litters.

Litter box location and number

1. Cats need quiet and privacy when using their litter box.
2. The litter box must be easily accessible.
3. The Golden Rule is “one litter box per cat, plus one.”

Informed owners

Our favorite books for cat owners:

From the Cat’s Point of View by G. Bohnenkamp. ISBN: 0964460114 and perfectpaws.com/cpv.html

Cats for Dummies (2nd ed.) by G. Spadafori. ISBN: 0764552759.

Your Home, Their Territory by C. A. Tony Buffington, DVM, PhD, DACVM. The Ohio State University Veterinary Medical Center, The Indoor Pet Initiative

How cats are...

Cats are not “pack animals” like people and dogs, so they respond more to rewards and are more fearful of punishment (hitting, yelling, “rubbing their nose in it”). Instead, we can reward cats for doing what we want by offering food or affection. We can make areas off-limits by using sticky tape, foil, citrus scent, or upside-down carpet runners in those places.

Ask the cat!

When making changes, always offer any new article, food, litter, etc., next to the familiar one so the cat can tell you if she prefers the new one to the old one.

Scratching and climbing structures

Scratching is a natural behavior for cats. Even declawed cats retain the instinct to scratch. Scratching posts provide cats with an outlet for their instinct to scratch, and save your furniture and carpets.

Most, but not all, cats prefer scratching posts made out of rough material they can shred. Scratching posts should be stabilized to ensure that they don’t move or tip over and scare your cat while she is using them.

Scratching posts should be located in “public” parts of the house that the whole family uses. In multi-cat households there should be several scratching posts, both vertical and horizontal, located throughout the house.

Rest and relaxation, and safety

Cats are at their most vulnerable while sleeping, so they prefer to rest in areas where they feel safe and secure. Cat beds can be purchased, but snug blankets and towels are just as appealing to cats and are easy to wash. The refuge should be a place where your cat feels safe and comfortable, for example a bedroom or back room. Your cat can retreat to her refuge when she wants to rest.

Play opportunities

Cat play is “pretend hunting” for birds, bugs or mice.

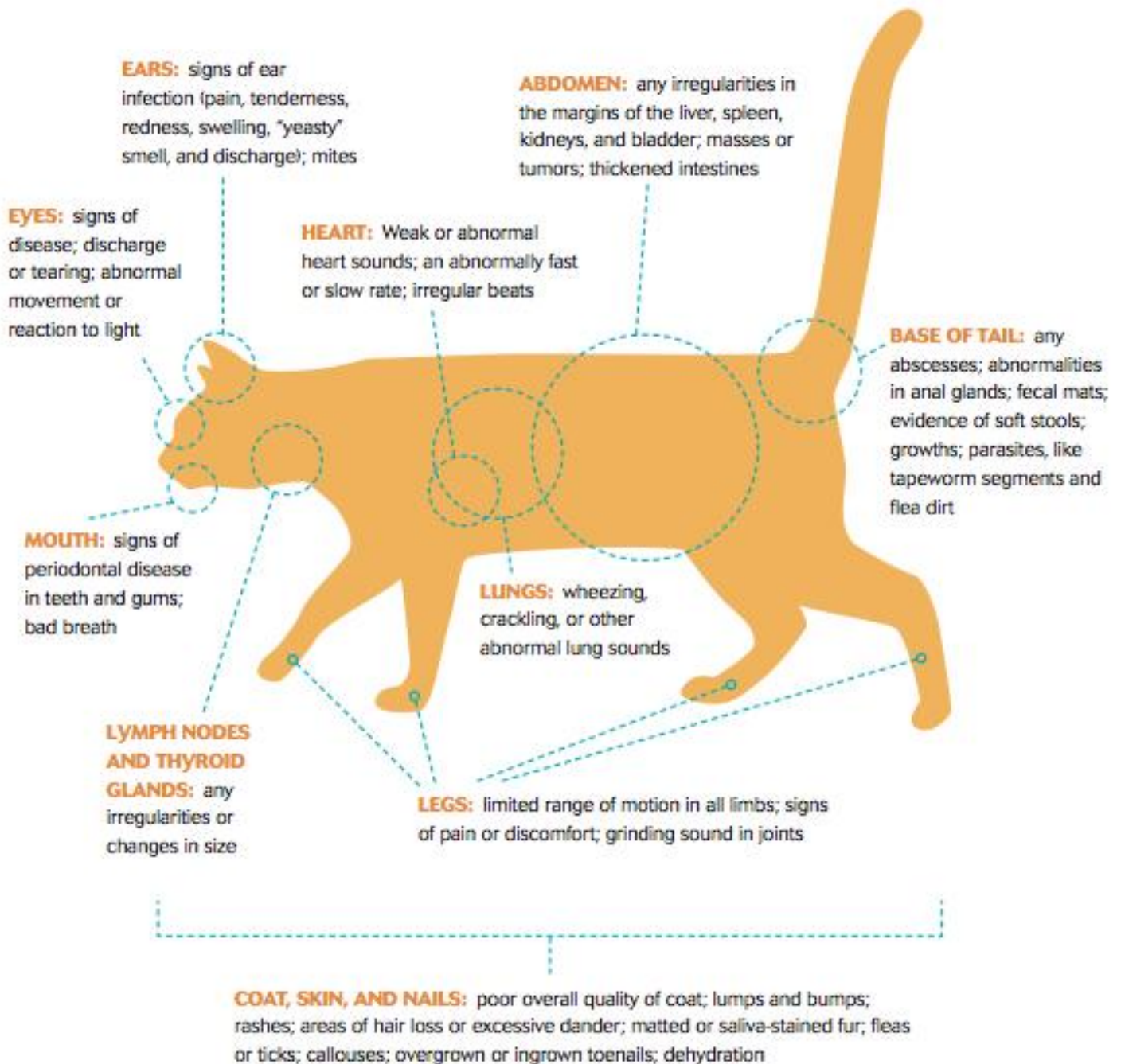
Some cats like toys that mimic their favorite prey, such as feather toys, play mice, or pieces of food rolled across the floor.

If your cat isn’t interested in toys, he may prefer to be brushed or petted.

Don’t let your cat “go in for the kill” on you!

Your cat's physical exam

Just what is the veterinarian looking for when they stare and gently push, pull, and poke your cat during a visit? Here's a breakdown of the major body systems they're checking out and what they're looking for (and hoping not to find).



What is good healthcare for cats?



Whether an independent soul or your constant companion, your feline friend needs good care to thrive. Here's a look at what that means—in the veterinary hospital and at home.

At the hospital:

> **ANNUAL WELLNESS EXAMINATIONS.** Cats can often mask how they're feeling—especially if they're under the weather. That's why it's critical to have your cat examined by a veterinarian every year. Older cats or those with behavioral or medical conditions may need to be seen more frequently.

> **DIAGNOSTIC TESTS.** Even if your cat seems healthy on the outside, an underlying problem may be lurking on the inside. Fecal exams, blood and urine tests, and other tests that screen for infectious diseases, such as feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) and feline leukemia virus (FeLV), may be required, based on your cat's age and lifestyle.

> **VACCINATIONS.** Even if your cat spends most or all of its time indoors, it may still be at risk for certain preventable viral diseases. Your veterinarian will assess your cat's risk and develop a vaccine protocol tailored specifically to its needs.

> **PARASITE CONTROL.** Cats are prime targets for parasites such as fleas and ticks, not to mention the ones we can't see like heartworms and intestinal parasites. Your veterinarian will discuss the best options to keep your cat free and clear of these dangerous pests.

> **DENTAL CARE.** Dental disease isn't just for dogs—cats are susceptible, too. Your veterinarian will examine your cat's mouth and determine if further action, like a full oral health assessment and treatment under anesthesia, is needed to keep your cat's teeth and gums in good shape.

> **BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT.** Just as your cat needs to be physically healthy, it needs to be emotionally healthy, too. Your veterinarian will ask questions about your cat's environment—whether there are other pets or children in the house and how your cat interacts with them, what kind of playful activities your cat participates in, and so on—and inquire about any behavioral issues that need attention.

> **NUTRITIONAL COUNSELING.** From questions about the type of food you're feeding and the frequency of meals to assessing your cat's body condition score, your veterinarian will want as much information as possible to determine if any adjustments need to be made in your cat's feeding regimen in order to keep it in the most healthy weight range.

At home:

> **NUTRITION.** Your veterinarian can determine the right type and amount of food your cat needs to stay in a healthy weight range, but the environment you provide for meals is important, too. Putting food in a quiet area or offering it in toys like food balls or puzzles can make mealtimes more enjoyable.

> **ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT.** Cats need to be in stimulating and comfortable surroundings, so be sure to provide plenty of toys, hiding spots, scratching posts and elevated resting areas in your home. And don't forget the importance of one-on-one playtime with you. This will also give you the chance to watch for any changes in behavior.

> **LITTER BOX NEEDS.** Provide at least one litter box per cat—and in a multicat house, throw in one extra box for good measure. In general, cats prefer open litter boxes in a clean, quiet environment and unscented, clumping litter. Cats are also finicky, so it's best not to switch up the brand and type of litter you use. And be sure to scoop the box at least once a day.

> **GROOMING.** Cats are pretty good at keeping their coats in good condition, but they may need help when it comes to claw care. Your veterinarian can show you how to trim your cat's nails. Even better, provide scratching posts for a DIY option—and an enrichment activity, too.

> **TRAVEL AND CARRIER ACCEPTANCE.** It's no secret that most cats dislike carriers, but it doesn't have to be that way. Condition your cat to feel comfortable in a carrier at a young age, if possible. Leave the carrier out in the house and let your cat wander in and out of it. Also, take your cat on short rides in the car, so it won't always associate getting in the carrier with a trip to the veterinarian.

VACCINES save kittens' LIVES

Doctors have a way to protect pets from diseases: vaccines. Here's why our hospital recommends them.

Back to basics: What's a vaccine?

The history starts with an epidemic of smallpox, which killed millions of people. In 1796, a physician named Edward Jenner noticed that the milk maids, who were routinely exposed to cowpox, did not get sick with smallpox. He wondered whether their exposure to cowpox protected them—and the idea of vaccination was born. A vaccine exposes the im-

mune system to inactive or incomplete disease-causing agents to train the immune system to quickly and effectively respond when exposed to the real thing.

If we expose cats to vaccines, if and when their immune systems face the real disease, they can fight it more easily. Think of vaccination like a training gym where athletes prepare their bodies and minds for actual competition.

cause we don't want to gamble with protection, veterinarians and other medical professionals believe it's far better to vaccinate too often than not enough.

While kittens receive some immune protection from their mother after they're born, that doesn't last for a cat's entire kittenhood. Eventually, kittens need to develop their own protection, and that's where vaccines come in. Since maternal immunity can interfere with the effectiveness of vaccines, we repeat them to make sure they're present when the kitten's own immune system takes over. This timeline varies between individual cats, so we follow guidelines to protect as many kittens as possible.

Which vaccines does my kitten need?

When a disease is widespread, dangerous—or both—researchers develop a vaccine against it. Vaccination choices are based on an individual kitten's lifestyle and risk factors. Your veterinary team can tell you which vaccines are appropriate and how they can be given.

Why does my kitten need to repeat vaccines ("boosters")?

We know that an immune system "remembers" diseases from vaccines, but we don't know how long the memory is for each individual animal. Be-

Are vaccines safe?

There have been cases of cats developing cancer in a spot where they've received a vaccination. The risk is small, however—especially for kittens—and it's better to vaccinate too often than not enough. Vaccination has saved innumerable lives, both human and animal. There are also isolated cases of allergic reactions, but these are rarely life-threatening when treated appropriately. It is important, however, that kittens not be randomly vaccinated outside of published recommendations. Vaccines are not one-size-fits-all and should be tailored to the individual kitten.



rice” that signal tapeworm infection or if your pet has diarrhea, bloody feces, weight loss, excessive coughing, or a dull coat, or is dragging (scooting) their rear end on the ground more than usual.

To test for intestinal parasites, your veterinarian may ask you to bring in a fresh stool sample, or may collect a small sample straight from your pet’s rear end. A portion of the sample will be prepared and examined under a microscope for the presence of worm eggs and single-celled parasites. Your veterinarian also may recommend an antigen test that detects certain parasite proteins in feces, or a test that detects parasite DNA. Giardia infection is harder to detect than other infections, and several stool samples may need to be tested before the parasite is found.

HOW CAN INTESTINAL PARASITES BE TREATED AND PREVENTED?

If worm eggs or tapeworm segments are found in your pet’s stool sample, this means your pet is infected with adult worms. Your veterinarian will recommend a deworming program to eliminate the parasites. Unfortunately, dewormers and other parasite preventive products don’t work on single-cell intestinal parasites like coccidia and *Giardia*. If these parasites are found and are making your pet sick, your veterinarian may recommend other medications to treat the infection.

Whether or not parasites are found in your pet’s stool sample, your veterinarian will recommend a regular parasite control program to protect your pet year-round. Several monthly heartworm prevention products also protect against intestinal worms and external parasites like fleas (which can carry tapeworms) and can help keep your pet safe. By using them for your pet, you’ll be protecting people as well. This is especially important in households with young children, the elderly, or people with weakened immune systems. Your veterinarian can help you decide which parasite control product and program is best given you and your pet’s unique needs.

You can further protect your pet from intestinal parasites by keeping them away from potential sources, like feces,

puddles, or rodents. For cats, the easiest way to do this is to keep your cat indoors. This also will protect other animals and people by preventing your cat from using gardens, sandboxes, and other sites as litterboxes.

Dog parks pose a particular risk of exposure to intestinal parasites, especially if dog waste isn’t immediately removed, because the parasites can survive for a long time in the environment. The easiest way to lower your dog’s risk when at the park or outside is to keep the dog leashed. You can protect others—no matter where you are—by immediately picking up your dog’s feces and properly disposing of it, and by avoiding dog parks and other public places if you know your dog has diarrhea or intestinal parasites.

People can avoid worm infections by practicing good hygiene and sanitation:

- Discourage children from eating dirt or playing in areas that might be soiled with animal feces.
- Keep sandboxes covered when not in use.
- Always wash your hands after handling soil and after contact with pets, and make sure children do the same.
- Wear shoes when outside to protect feet from any parasite larvae.
- Wash raw vegetables thoroughly.
- Immediately pick up animal feces from your yard, garden, and public areas and properly dispose of it.

A regular parasite control program can protect your pet year-round.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HOW TO KEEP YOUR PET HAPPY AND HEALTHY AS LONG AS POSSIBLE, VISIT:

American Veterinary Medical Association
avma.org/PetOwners

INTESTINAL PARASITES IN CATS AND DOGS

Brought to you by your veterinarian and the American Veterinary Medical Association



avma.org

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Most internal parasites in dogs and cats are worms and single-celled organisms that live and reproduce in the intestines. The most common are roundworms, hookworms, whipworms, and tapeworms, and the single-cell parasites *Coccidia* and *Giardia*.

ROUNDWORMS: WHAT ARE THEY AND HOW ARE THEY SPREAD?

Roundworms are common in dogs and cats. They get their name from their tubular bodies. Infected animals pass roundworm eggs in their feces (droppings). Your pet can catch roundworms by swallowing these eggs in feces-contaminated soil or water, and by licking contaminated fur or paws. Once inside the body, the eggs hatch, releasing larvae that move through the lungs and liver and eventually settle in the small intestine. There, they grow to adult worms and mate, producing eggs and continuing the infection cycle. Roundworm infections usually peak during the winter and decrease over the summer.

Puppies and kittens are especially vulnerable to roundworms. Infected female dogs may pass the parasite to their puppies before birth or afterwards through their milk when puppies are nursing. Infected female cats cannot infect their kittens before birth, but can pass on the infection through their milk.

What are the health risks to pets and people?

Adult roundworms steal nutrients from the food that pets eat, and can cause poor nutrition and intestinal problems. In young animals, roundworm larvae also can cause serious respiratory problems like pneumonia as the larvae move through the lungs.

Roundworm infections are zoonotic, meaning that they can be transmitted to people. Most human infections come from accidentally swallowing roundworm eggs. Children, especially those who eat dirt, are at particular risk. Unlike

Roundworm and hookworm infections can be spread to people.

in pets, roundworm larvae in people travel to organs like the liver, lungs, and brain and settle there, never becoming adult worms. Most infected people will have no symptoms. However, those unable to fully fight the infection—such as young children, the elderly, and people with weakened immune systems—may develop lung, brain, liver, or eye damage.

HOOKWORMS: WHAT ARE THEY AND HOW ARE THEY SPREAD?

Hookworms are also common in dogs, and cats are vulnerable too. They get their name from their hook-like mouthparts. Infected animals pass hookworm eggs in their feces, which then hatch in the environment to release larvae. Your pet can become infected by swallowing larvae in feces-contaminated substances or by eating an infected animal or insect. Direct contact with the larvae also can cause infection if they penetrate your pet's skin. An infected female dog can pass the parasite to her puppies through her milk, but this does not occur in cats. Once an animal is infected, hookworm larvae travel through their body. Larvae that make it to the small intestine attach themselves there, where they grow into adult worms and produce eggs. Unlike roundworms, hookworm infections peak in the summer and fall.

What are the health risks to pets and people?

Hookworms are dangerous because the adults actually bite into the intestinal lining of an animal and suck blood. Puppies and kittens are at high risk of infection and developing severe disease. Left untreated, hookworm infections can result in weakness, poor nutrition, and potentially life-threatening blood loss.

Hookworms also can infect people if the larvae are swallowed or penetrate the skin—for example, when someone is walking barefoot on contaminated soil or sand. Swallowed larvae can cause intestinal and other problems in people. Larvae that penetrate the skin can cause severe itching and tunnel-like, red areas.

WHIPWORMS: WHAT ARE THEY AND HOW ARE THEY SPREAD?

Whipworms get their name from their whip-like shape. Infection is much more common in dogs than in cats. Infected animals (mostly dogs, foxes, and coyotes) pass whipworm eggs in their feces. Your pet can catch whipworms by swallowing whipworm eggs in feces-contaminated soil and by licking contaminated fur or paws. Infections tend to peak in the winter.

What are the health risks to pets and people?

Adult whipworms thread themselves into the lining of an animal's intestine and eat blood and tissue. Although this may sound serious, whipworms usually do not cause health problems in dogs or cats. Occasionally, severe infections can occur, causing diarrhea, weight loss, blood loss, or even death. The risk of pets spreading whipworms to people is considered low.

TAPEWORMS: WHAT ARE THEY AND HOW ARE THEY SPREAD?

Tapeworms get their name from their long, thin, flat appearance, like strips of tape. Dogs and cats become infected with certain types of tapeworms when they swallow fleas or lice infected with tapeworm larvae. This happens most commonly when the dog or cat is grooming. Your pet also can catch certain types of tapeworms by eating infected rodents.

What are the health risks to pets and people?

Adult tapeworms live in the small intestine, but rarely cause disease. Infection is usually diagnosed when egg-containing tapeworm segments are seen under the pet's tail, in their feces, or on their bedding. These segments look like flattened grains of rice or cucumber seeds, and could be mistaken for maggots or fly larvae. Only rarely are these types of tapeworms a risk to people.

OTHER INTESTINAL PARASITES

Coccidia

Coccidia are microscopic, single-celled parasites. Dogs and cats are vulnerable to certain types of *coccidia*, which are broadly known as *Cystoisospora*. Like other intestinal parasites, infected animals pass *coccidia* in their feces. Your pet can become infected by swallowing feces-contaminated soil, food, or water, and by licking contaminated paws or fur. Once swallowed, *coccidia* damage the lining of the intestines and interfere with absorption of nutrients. Infected animals may have loss of appetite, abdominal pain, diarrhea (which may contain blood), dehydration, and weakness. However, these signs don't always occur, and other infected animals may seem healthy.

Puppies and kittens are particularly vulnerable to *coccidia* infection and severe illness because they have no immunity to the parasite. This means that the infection is highly contagious to other puppies and kittens. However, the types of *coccidia* that infect dogs and cats are not known to infect people.



Giardia

Giardia are also single-celled parasites that, if swallowed, can damage the lining of the intestine and reduce nutrient absorption. They too are passed in feces. Your pet can catch *Giardia* through the same routes as *coccidia*. Infected animals may have diarrhea (persistent or on-and-off) and/or greasy (fatty) feces, excess gas, and weight loss, while others may seem healthy. The strains of *Giardia* that infect dogs and cats do not usually infect people.

HOW ARE INTESTINAL PARASITES DIAGNOSED?

Except for some tapeworm infections, you won't be able to tell your pet has intestinal parasites just by looking at their feces. In fact, pets can look healthy and still have intestinal parasites, and some pets can be infected with multiple types of parasites at the same time. Plus, infections can happen any time of the year.

This is why routine fecal testing is so important—ideally twice a year or more for adult pets, four times a year or more for puppies and kittens, or if your pet is pregnant. See your veterinarian sooner if you notice the “grains of



Preventing pet poisoning emergencies

Poisons in plain sight

Many common household items such as plants, foods and chemicals can be harmful to your pet if ingested. Be informed so that you're prepared if you find yourself in a pet poisoning emergency.

Top 10 toxin calls

received by Pet Poison Helpline

Cats

1. Lilies
2. Topical flea and tick medicine for dogs (containing pyrethroids and pyrethrins)
3. Household cleaners
4. Antidepressant medications
5. Mouse and rat poisons
6. Ibuprofen and acetaminophen
7. Glow sticks/glow jewelry
8. Amphetamines such as ADD/ADHD drugs
9. Decongestant medications
10. Essential oils

Dogs

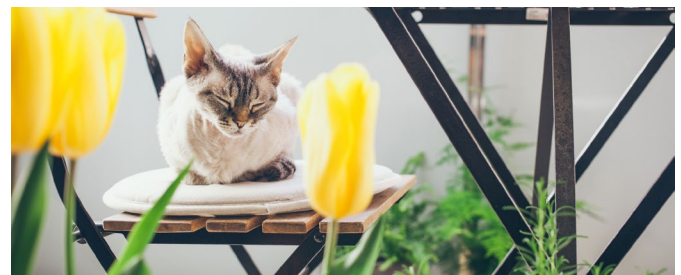
1. Chocolate
2. Mouse and rat poisons
3. Ibuprofen and acetaminophen
4. Xylitol (found in sugar-free gums and candies)
5. Vitamin D (ingested in large amounts)
6. Antidepressant medications
7. Fertilizers
8. Grapes and raisins
9. Decongestant medications
10. Caffeine (pills and drinks)

Poisonous plants

Many plants are poisonous to animals, but the following are some of the most common—and some can even be lethal.

- Autumn crocus (*Colchicum autumnale*)
- Azalea & rhododendron
- Cycad/sago palms (*Cycas*, *Macrozamia* and *Zamia* spp.)
- Dieffenbachia
- Lily (*Lilium* and *Hermerocallis* spp.)—cats only
- Lily of the Valley (*Convallaria majalis*)
- Oleander (*Nerium oleander*)
- Spring bulbs (e.g. daffodil, hyacinth, tulip, spring crocus)
- Yesterday, today and tomorrow (*Brunfelsia* spp.)
- Yew (*Taxus* spp.)

For a more complete listing of poisonous plants, visit petpoisonhelpline.com.



Garden dangers

Be a garden guardian and keep these substances away from pets.

- Baits (rodent, snail and slug)
- Blood meal
- Bone meal
- Fertilizers (rose and other plants)
- Pesticides

Household toxins

When using common household chemicals such as cleaning solutions, antifreeze and fragrance sprays, make sure there's adequate ventilation and thoroughly wipe up any spills. Also, tightly close bottles and containers, and stow them safely in cabinets that pets can't get into.

Non-ingested poisons

Poisons aren't always ingested; some can be inhaled or cause chemical burns on the skin.

Inhaled poisons: Carbon monoxide, smoke and chemical fumes

Skin poisons: Ammonia, lye, drain and toilet cleaners, concentrated tea tree oil

Toxic table scraps

Though sharing "just a bite" of food with your pet seems harmless, many human foods can be dangerous—even deadly—for dogs and cats.

- Alcohol
- Caffeine
- Chocolate
- Fatty foods
- Grapes and raisins
- Macadamia nuts

Human medications

Never give your pet human medications like ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®), naproxen (Aleve®), or combination allergy products with decongestants or "cold and flu" formulations. These drugs can cause liver, kidney and neurological damage to pets.

Keep human drugs in a separate place from your pet's drugs. Accidentally giving human meds to pets is one of the most common pet poisoning emergencies.

Pet medications

Never give your cat medications meant for a dog. Cats' unique metabolic pathways make them more sensitive to many drugs; giving your cat pain relievers or flea/tick meds made for dogs can be lethal.

Pet Poison Helpline

If you think your pet may have ingested something harmful, seek immediate veterinary advice:

855-289-0358

Available 24/7

Please be advised that a one-time, per-incident consultation fee applies.

Have the following information ready when calling:

- What your pet ingested and when
- How much your pet ingested (how many pills, milligram strength, etc.)
- Pet's current weight
- Pet's known medical history, including medications

What to do in an emergency

Stay calm so you can assess the situation and communicate clearly with your veterinarian. Most importantly, don't administer at-home treatment without first seeking veterinary advice.

Scan the surroundings

- Safely remove any remaining poisonous material from your pet's reach
- Gather the container or substance to bring to the veterinary hospital or describe to Pet Poison Helpline
- Collect a sample if your pet has vomited

Get help

If your pet is unconscious, convulsing or having difficulty breathing, go immediately to the nearest emergency veterinary hospital. While they are stabilizing your pet, call Pet Poison Helpline at **855-289-0358** for treatment recommendations.

Be prepared

- ✓ Program your phone with numbers for:
 - Your veterinarian
 - 24-hr emergency veterinarian
 - Pet Poison Helpline (855-289-0358)
- ✓ Save a note in your phone with your pet's weight and current medications
- ✓ Sign up for Nationwide pet insurance coverage

We're here to help

Nationwide® offers pet insurance coverage for accidents, illnesses and preventive care. Get a fast, no-obligation quote today.

BestPetInsuranceEver.com
800-672-9259

Pet Poison Helpline
855-289-0358
petpoisonhelpline.com

This educational pamphlet is provided by Nationwide in coordination with Pet Poison Helpline, an animal poison control center based out of Minneapolis, Minn. Driven by our shared passion for pets, our common goal is to provide pet lovers with valuable information on pet health and safety.

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A per incident fee applies.

Body Language of Feline Anxiety



Slight crouching



Major crouching

More Subtle Signs of Fear & Anxiety



Dilated Eyes



Ears Turned Back,
Furrowed Brow



Staring,
Focused on Object



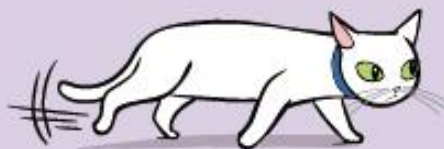
Hiding,
Looks Half Asleep



Laying on Side,
Tail Flicking



Hair Raised, Staring,
Ears Turned Back



Walking with Flat Back,
Tail Down, Head Down



Ready to Jump Off Perch



Suddenly Grooming,
Excessive Grooming

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5 ways to protect your new cat

Not sure how to be the perfect cat parent? Here's help to make sure your cat is purring all the way into her senior years.



1 Schedule a neuter/spay day. Spaying or neutering doesn't just help with cat population control. It can also help minimize and prevent many serious health risks, if done while the pet is still young. In males, it reduces the tendency to roam and get into fights, which may lead to injuries. In both male and female cats, it eliminates the risk of some reproductive cancers, including uterine, ovarian, and testicular cancer, and it may reduce the risk of mammary cancer.



2 Better start brushing. Dental problems are one of the most common findings in cats of all ages. To help keep your cat's teeth healthy and pain-free, get your hands on appropriate toothbrushes (or alternatives) and special toothpaste for cats. (People toothpaste is not safe for pets.) Also have her teeth examined and professionally cleaned by your veterinarian to prevent or treat dental disease early. Your veterinary team can teach you to safely brush your cat's teeth and keep her teeth in tiptop shape for years to come.



3 Be a regular at the hospital. More frequent visits are recommended for older cats, and it's also a good idea for younger cats to catch subtle changes in health and stay on top of any behavioral or attitudinal changes. The veterinarian will examine your pet and advise you about your cat's changing needs as she grows and ages.



4 Keep an eye on that cat. Cats can be masters of disguise, which is why Tip # 3 is so important. Be sure to let your veterinarian know about changes in your cat's behavior or elimination, eating, and drinking habits. Also double-check the doses on your cat's preventive medications and make sure she's up to date on her vaccines.



5 Get the diet right. If you want your cat to live a long and healthy life, pay special attention to her diet. There are serious health risks associated with obesity. A nutritionally balanced diet designed for your cat's life stage, breed, and health status should provide her with all she needs. Cats are picky eaters, and exposing them to foods with different flavors, textures, and shapes early in life can make dietary changes later much easier. Discuss diet with your veterinarian to ensure your cat is getting the right nutrition for her age and breed.

Pro tip: Ask your veterinarian to calculate the calories your pet needs and then measure out the amount of your cat's food you should offer to prevent obesity.

Take steps to protect your wallet against unexpected costs and protect your savings in case of a pet accident or emergency. Many veterinary services are included in pet insurance and wellness plans—ask your veterinary team which plans they recommend.

How to create low-stress veterinary visits for cats



The ominous hissing, the mournful meows, the defensive scratching or biting, the upset bowels—feline stress is just plain unpleasant for cats and you. Many cats get stressed when it's time for a veterinary visit. Thankfully, there are ways to help cats relax and enjoy the ride—yes, even in the car. Here's what you can do.

1 Transport your cat in a carrier

Putting cats in a carrier on the way to and from the veterinary clinic is extremely important. Cats are often startled by loud noises or other pets, and, if you're carrying your cat in your hands, you might not be able to hold on if it abruptly tries to get away. Also, cats that are allowed to roam freely inside the car face the risk of more severe injury should there be an accident.



2 Choose a hard-plastic carrier with a removable top

Some cats might resist being put into a carrier. But removable tops make getting cats into—and out of—the carrier easier. Simply undo the screws or latches, lift off the top, set the cat in the bottom, and replace the top. This eliminates the need to force the cat inside, which makes the cat—and you—more relaxed.

3 Make the carrier a favorite place

Some cats come to love their carriers. When cats see their carriers as safe, enjoyable places, they're

happy to go into them and feel more safe in scary places, like the car. Use these strategies to create crate-fondness in your cat:

- Leave the carrier out in your house so your cat can access it at any time.
- Make the carrier inviting by putting a favorite blanket or toy in it.
- Every now and then, lay a few treats inside the carrier.

4 Head to the veterinary clinic for "happy visits"

Does your cat seem to bristle at the thought of visiting the veterinarian? Then take it on a few stress-free trial runs. Call the veterinary clinic to ask if the schedule would allow you and your cat to stop in for five or 10 minutes. You won't be making a medical visit, but rather a mock appointment that allows your cat to experience all the steps of a routine visit without the physical examination. This free-of-charge "happy visit" gives your cat the chance to get used to the sounds and smells of the clinic, meet the veterinary team members, and eat a few treats all while enjoying the safety of its carrier. After some canoodling, you and your cat will head back home.

If a car ride alone puts your cat in a tailspin, entice your cat into its carrier and start by going for a test drive around the block. Continue to take a drive every now and then, gradually increasing the amount of time you and your cat spend in the car. Remember to reward your cat with a treat for being a good passenger. Eventually, you'll work your way up to doing a drive that will allow you and your cat to make a "happy visit." Positive reinforcement is the best way to modify feline behavior, so making car rides and veterinary visits pleasant will help decrease your cat's anxiety.

