



Kitty Basics

It's exciting bringing a new kitten into your life. You probably can't wait to show your friends the cutie you picked out. And, of course, you want to play with him right away. But remember, your kitten suddenly is in an environment he doesn't know. Give him some time to adjust to his new home. Here are some hints to make him feel as comfortable as possible:



- Teach children not to be rough with the kitten; no pulling ears, whiskers or tail
- Act calmly, not rowdy, around kitten
- Provide a warm, soft bed (or box or crate) in a cozy, out of the way place
- Give kitten a soft, indestructible toy or two
- Play with kitten at least 30 minutes per day
- Never let your kitten put his teeth on a human, even at play

There are vaccines that your kitten should receive between six and sixteen to twenty weeks of age to make him safe and healthy in his new world, whether indoors or outdoors. Some viruses may be brought into your house on people's clothing or shoes. There is also a risk that a cat may be in contact with a disease-carrying cat in your yard or house. Some vaccinations require booster shots to maintain effective levels of protection. Be sure to ask your vet about these. Your veterinarian may administer these at separate times a few weeks apart, each time in one injection.

Kitten Checkup & Vaccination Schedule

6 weeks: Doctor visit

- Test for Feline Leukemia Virus and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FELV/FIV)
- Feline Distemper vaccine (rhinotracheitis, calicivirus and pneumonitis) - 1st of 3 boosters
- For outside cats only, Feline Leukemia vaccine given in combination with the distemper vaccine – 1st of 3 boosters
- Fecal sample – check stool for worms and intestinal parasites
- Physical exam – skin, coat, ears, mouth, chest, abdomen, teeth, and eyes
- Discuss diet, litterbox training, grooming, spaying or neutering, vaccine reaction symptoms, emergency clinic, vaccine schedule, flea & tick control

9 weeks: Technician visit

- Feline Distemper booster #2
- Learn how to trim nails and brush teeth

12 weeks: Technician visit

- Feline Distemper booster #3
- Rabies vaccination (required by law)
- Fecal check (if needed)

16 weeks:

- Rabies vaccination (if not given at last visit)

Important Feline Diseases

- Feline Distemper– also called panleukopenia, is a highly contagious, potentially fatal disease among cats. It affects the intestinal tract and bone marrow.
- Upper Respiratory Disease – highly contagious viral infections including rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, and pneumonitis

- Feline Leukemia – (FELV) the leading cause of death from infectious agents in cats; a virus which inhibits the immune system and results in various types of cancer and other chronic diseases. It is present in saliva, urine and other body fluids
- Feline Immunodeficiency Virus – (FIV) weakens a cat’s immune system. Similar to the human HIV virus but is not transmitted to humans.
- Rabies – a virus contracted by exposure to a rabid animal, it attacks the nervous system and is *always* fatal
- **Disease Testing** – *kittens should be tested for FIV and FELV at least twice during their first year of life*

Protecting Against Worms & Fleas

Your kitten was at risk for getting worms from his mother before he was even born. Worms are intestinal parasites and pose a risk that should not be ignored. Protecting your kitten requires constant, lifelong attention. Treating your pet is easy, fast and painless.

- Heartworms – are one of the most deadly of all animal parasites. Heartworm disease spreads when mosquitoes bite an infected dog and then pass the larvae into the bloodstream of a cat. These microfilariae then mature into adults and live in the cat’s body.
- Roundworms – may develop prior to birth or from nursing or later in life by ingesting roundworm eggs or larvae.
They attach to the intestinal lining and leave bleeding internal wounds. Symptoms include weakness, weight loss, haggard appearance, and dull unkempt fur.
Hookworms – though rare in cats, can come from a kitten’s mother while nursing. Symptoms included vomiting, diarrhea, and stunted growth.
- Fleas – flea eggs that have fallen off a pet develop into larvae which hide in carpet, furniture, leaves or other dark places. Adult fleas can then easily attach themselves to the pet when the pet comes in contact with those locations. Symptoms include itching, skin irritation, extreme discomfort, and tell-tale flea “dirt” in the pet’s fur. Effective flea control products not only kill adult fleas but will prevent flea larvae from reproducing or hatching.

Kitten Basics

Kittens require very little compared to the love and companionship we get from them. Below are the basic items you should always provide.

Food & Water Bowls

Stainless steel is easiest to keep clean and doesn't break. And kittens can have allergic reactions to plastic bowls.



Litter Box

Rest assured, litter box training should be easy for you and your kitten. Most kittens naturally feel the urge to dig in substrate material to eliminate as early as four weeks. We recommend an unhooded litter box with scoopable unscented litter. Place him in the box every time he shows signs of being ready to use it. Praise him lavishly when he is good. If you interfere with your kitten while he's in his litter box he may develop an aversion to using the box. So let him have his privacy. Place the box in a quiet location that your cat can access at all times. Always keep the box clean, remove soiled litter and change the litter often, at least once a week or more often if necessary.

Grooming Brush or Mitt

Brushing your kitten regularly keeps his coat looking nice and feels good to your pet. And just as important, this is time for you and your kitten to bond. Begin combing and brushing early in life so he will be accustomed to it. For long-haired cats, use a long-toothed metal comb and a stiff brush. Shorthaired cats can be groomed with a soft rubber brush or hand mitt.

Kittens and cats do an excellent job of cleaning themselves but even the neatest cat can get hairballs. You may one day see him vomit a long, dark mass – commonly called a hairball – made up of hair he has ingested. If regular combing and brushing do not eliminate the hairballs ask your veterinarian about remedies specifically for hairballs.

Toys

Kittens will play with anything that moves, rolls, rustles, or sways. Choose toys made especially for cats or try these “homemade” toys: ping-pong ball, unshelled walnut, empty wooden thread spool, cardboard toilet paper tube, balled up waxed paper.

Avoid: rubber bands, thread, balls of string or yarn, aluminum foil balls, corks, wire twist ties.

Safety

You’ll soon see that a curious kitten will explore anything and everything he can reach. And he doesn’t know which things are kitten-safe. “Kitten-proof” your house by doing these important things:

- Keep electrical cords out of chewing reach
- Keep household and garden chemicals locked away
- Keep cans/bags secure from kitten
- Check around vehicles before moving them
- Familiarize yourself with the houseplants that are toxic to cats. Consult a list of such plants at <http://www.cfainc.org/catcare/householdhazards/toxicplants.aspx>

Feeding Your Kitten

At first, it’s important to feed your kitten the same thing he was eating before you brought him home. As he gets used to his new environment you can gradually introduce the food you chose. Many commercial foods are acceptable but be sure to choose a well-balanced one. Consult your veterinarian for how much and how often to feed your kitten. It will depend on his energy level. Fat cats have a *high* risk of diabetes melitis.

Choose a convenient place to feed your kitten and use this spot consistently. It is best to avoid "buffet" feeding; instead, feed twice daily. Be sure to clean your kitten’s dishes before every use and always give him fresh water at each feeding.

Store-bought kitten treats are fine to give him, but they are actually full of fat. Be aware of how many treats your kitten eats and try to adjust the amount of food in his regular meals accordingly.

Caring for Teeth

A healthy diet keeps teeth clean and gums healthy. However, tartar will inevitably build up so have your cat's teeth checked regularly by a veterinarian. Between visits you can brush his teeth yourself with special pet toothpaste and a soft brush. Dental wipes also help if you cannot brush them yourself.

Clipping Nails

Clip kitten's nails about every six weeks using special cat clippers. Some owners prefer to have a veterinarian do the clipping because it's a delicate task to keep from clipping into the quick. However, just using a nail file will often help keep nails in check without the danger of cutting into the "quick" of the nail.

Socializing Kitten

Exposing your kitten to many people is an important part of socialization and seems to lessen his fear of strangers. If there are small children in your house, introduce them to kitty gradually. Frequent handling and gentle playing are important, but children must understand that your kitten is a sensitive, living creature. He may resort to scratching or biting to protect himself if he's frightened. Teach the children how to pick him up and hold him. Slip one hand under his chest, holding the front legs gently but firmly with your fingers. At the same time, cup the other hand under kitty's hindquarters. **Never** pick him up by the scruff of the neck or legs!

Other Family Pets

If there are other pets in the house, introduce them to your kitten with care and caution. An older cat will usually accept a new kitten and will eventually help take care of him. But do not leave them alone together until you are sure they are friends.



Most dogs and cats also get along, but this may take a little longer. There may be hissing and barking but there is every chance that before long they will be playing together. Again, it's smart not to leave them together unattended until you see a positive interaction.

Keep the cat litter box away from dogs.

A Healthy Cat

Spaying/Neutering

Unless you are planning to breed a purebred cat, neutering or spaying is recommended. It is the responsible way to prevent the birth of unwanted kittens.

Spaying is the surgical removal of the female cat's uterus and ovaries. After spaying, she will not experience heat cycles or become pregnant. The ideal time for spaying is at five to six months of age, before her first heat cycle. Once spayed, her disposition should only change for the better. She'll be more relaxed, playful and affectionate. Spaying also reduces the risk of uterine infections, tumors, and hormonal imbalances.



Neutering is the surgical removal of the male cat's testicles through two small incisions in the scrotum. If not neutered your male cat may exhibit an uncontrollable urge to roam by the time he turns one year old. And as he grows older, he may develop the habit of spraying walls and furniture with streams of foul-smelling urine as a way of claiming territory. Ideally, a male kitten should be neutered at five to six months of age.

Preventing Illness

Besides generally being “in touch” with your kitten, there are regimented measures you can take to prevent illness.

- Never give "people" medicine to your cat unless directed by your veterinarian. For example, Tylenol or aspirin can be fatal. Always administer the veterinarian-prescribed medicines to your pet as directed. Since there are some diseases that are almost always fatal, the best approach is prevention.
- Always take your pet to see his veterinarian at least once a year for a check-up and more often than that if your veterinarian recommends. Vaccinations and boosters are routinely handled at these check-ups and missing even one injection could put your pet at risk for disease.
- At home, get in the habit of regularly checking your kitten for fleas, ticks or skin conditions. Preventing fleas and internal parasites is easy. Ask your veterinarian.

Cat FACTS

Here are some facts that you might find interesting:

- Sight is one of a cat’s strongest senses because his eyes are so big. In fact, if your eyes were proportionately as big as a cat’s they would each be about eight inches in diameter. Even in extremely dark situations your cat sees an image and is quick to distinguish even the slightest movement.
- Your kitten’s whiskers are extremely sensitive and help guide him when there is complete absence of light. They alert your cat to anything he might brush up against. His whiskers are sensitive to air movement and work with the olfactory system to alert him of changes in his environment.
- Your kitten’s tail serves as an indicator of mood!
 - Carried high, he’s proud and contented
 - Extended straight, he’s stalking
 - Thrusting from side to side, he may be angry

- Purring is believed to come from vibrations in the wall of one of the major blood vessels in the cat's chest. These vibrations, transmitted to your cat's upper air passages, results in a purring sound. Cats start purring when they are kittens and most of them purr when they are secure, content or sleeping. However, some cats purr when ill or frightened.
- Kneading ("making biscuits") is the motion a kitten first makes instinctively when he is nursing from his mother. It consists of pressing first one, then the other, front paw against his mother's tummy. Many cats continue to do this as they grow into adulthood. It is usually a sign of contentment and affection and is often accompanied by purring. In lieu of the mother cat your cat will knead anything soft, such as your favorite sweater, a pillow, your lap, or even your hair.
- Claw "sharpening" or scratching is merely satisfying his instinct to stretch and clean his claws. Another reason cats "scratch" is to mark their territory. They do this by leaving a visible sign and their scent, which is released from glands between their toes. Provide a scratching post as a substitute for your furniture.