CARING FOR YOUR CAT
FOOD & WATER

FOOD

Dry cat food available at pet food stores will provide your cat with a well-balanced diet. Kittens should be fed kitten food until about one year old. Some cats may require a special diet due to medical conditions. It's always best to talk to a veterinarian if you need help.

Canned food is a good supplement and might make mealtime more delicious for picky eaters. If you use canned food, don't forget to cut down on the dry food.

How much should you feed?
Follow instructions on the bag and split the daily portion into two or three meals per day. Cats prefer multiple small meals throughout the day.

Have more than one cat? Some cats are okay to share food but make sure each has access. You may need to have multiple dishes around your home so that your cats can eat and drink safely.

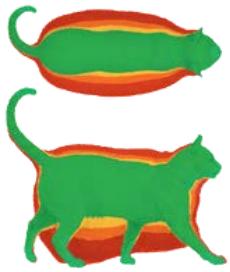
WATER

Your cat should always have access to clean water. Change the water daily and wash out the bowl regularly.

TREATS

Treats made for cats are perfect for training and rewarding good behaviours. It's okay to feed treats but too many can cause health concerns. Try portioning out treats each day to help manage overfeeding.

WATCH THEIR WEIGHT!



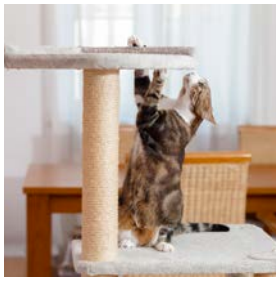
Extra weight sometimes seems cute but it is bad for your cats's health. Your cat's ribs should be easily felt when you're petting them but you should not be able to see them through their fur. If your cat is getting a little heavy, cut down on the food or if your cat is able, encourage them to be more active. Having trouble bringing their weight down? Talk to a veterinarian – something else might be going on.

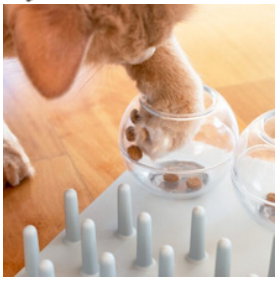
Keep your cat in the green zone!

ENCOURAGE MORE PLAY

Cats love to climb. Provide them a tall cat tree or the opportunity to safely jump onto furniture.
Have play sessions with a wand toy or catnip ball.
Try puzzle feeders or make your own with a toilet paper roll.
Cats are natural hunters! Place or hide multiple bowls around your home with pre-portioned kibble. Your cat will enjoy the hunt!

Make-at-home cat toy:
-one toilet paper roll
-cut a couple of holes
-fold in ends
-insert kibble or treats!

TOO SKINNY?

Your cat can also be too skinny. You should not be able to see ribs or their spine through their skin and fur. If your cat is not gaining weight, consult with a veterinarian.

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CARING FOR YOUR CAT

HOME ENVIRONMENT

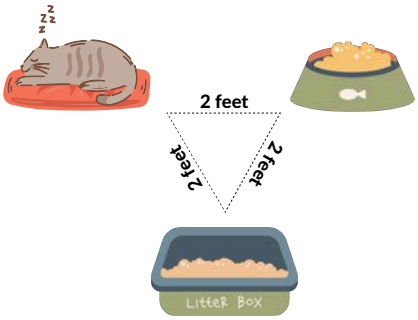
Your cat needs a comfortable environment that is well ventilated and includes protection from heat, cold and damp.

Your home should include:

- A variety of places to rest (e.g., bare floor, beds, blanket, tile)
- Floor space and the freedom to move about
- Areas for your cat to hide
- Places for your cat to perch and chill
- The opportunity to move up and down, climb and jump
- Surfaces to scratch
- Separation of food/water, resting areas and litter

THE TWO-FOOT RULE

Cats need space between where they eat and drink, rest and use the litter box. Leave **at least two feet** of distance between these areas.



TOXIC PLANTS

If eaten or chewed, many plants can be harmful to cats. While some cats may show no interest, kittens and many cats may not be able to resist. A short list includes: lilies, cyclamen, poison hemlock, tulips, irises, oleander, daffodils and kalanchoe. Bringing a new plant or flowers into your home? Protect your cat and do a quick search online to see if it's safe for your cat.


Lily


Cyclamen


Poison Hemlock


Tulip


Oleander


Kalanchoe

DRUGS & PARAPHERNALIA

Cats are curious, and kittens can be mischievous. Watch your cat closely and keep them away from drugs, used foils or cookers. **Keep paraphernalia out of reach of your pets.**

Get a plastic shoe box with a snap-on lid to store your drugs and stuff.

Suspect your cat got into something? Call a veterinarian or emergency clinic for advice. If you know your pet has gotten into opioids and see signs of poisoning, **naloxone can be given to pets** and should be administered right away. If it's a stimulant, you can't reverse this – take your pet to a vet immediately.

Do not give your cat any human meds (like Tylenol, Advil, Aspirin, etc.) unless you have talked to a vet.

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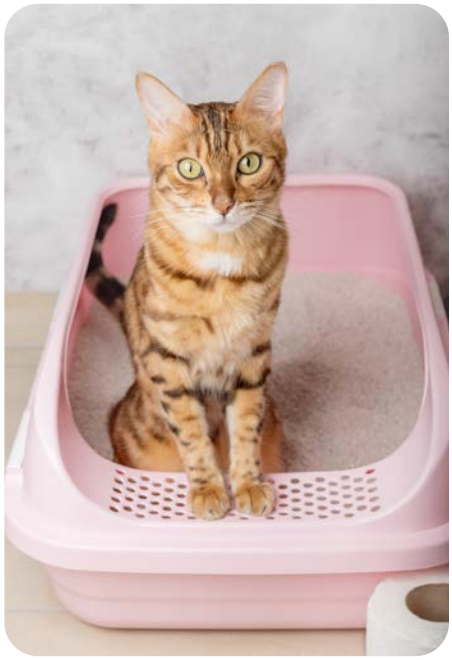
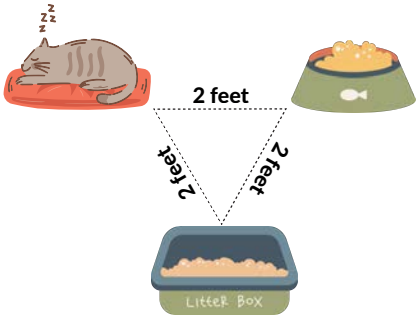
CARING FOR YOUR CAT
HOME ENVIRONMENT



LITTER BOX Q & A

Do I need to train my cat to use the litter box?

Cats do not need much house training. Even as kittens, instinct tells them to use a litter box!



Where should the litter box go?

Cats like privacy. Choose a quiet and accessible area that offers an escape route. Keep it away from resting and eating areas. Remember the Two-Foot Rule!

How many litter boxes do I need?

Have **one litter box per cat** and if you have the space, it's good to have an extra one!

Which litter box do I choose?

There are many options available. Cats need a box that is at least one and a half times longer than themselves and is wide enough to turn around in. Boxes with lids offer privacy and may be nicer for you, but they also trap smells and generally provide only one way in and out. Make sure you clean the box more if your box has a lid.

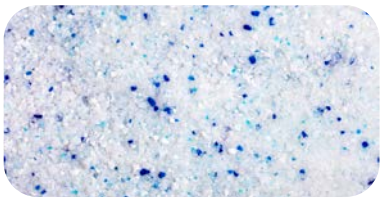
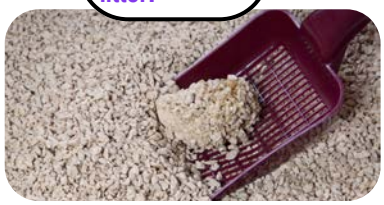
What type of litter should I use?

There are lots of options, and some cats are pickier than others. It may take some time to figure out what your cat likes best. Cats generally prefer litter that is **unscented** and small grains over larger pellet types.

Always wash your hands after handling and scooping litter!

HELPFUL TIPS



How much litter do I need?

Cats like to dig. Give them about 2 to 3 inches of litter. This will give them a chance to cover their poop!

How often should I clean the litter box?

Scoop your litter boxes **once or twice a day**. Once a month, give the litter box a good wash with warm, soapy water. Cats have super sensitive noses so if you think the litter box smells, imagine how your cat feels. Avoid using strong smelling cleaning products as well.

My cat keeps peeing and/or pooping OUTSIDE of the box. What can I do?

There are a number of reasons this could be happening. Some tips to encourage your cat to use the litter box:

- Clean it more often
- Change the litter (try something unscented or different size grains, as some cats don't like clumping litter)
- Change the location of the litter box (move it away from anything noisy that might scare your cat)
- Try adding another litter box
- Try giving it a good wash with a product like Nature's Miracle or Urine Off in case it smells like another cat
- Tidy up your space to remove the option for your cat to choose something other than the litter box (sometimes cats prefer a piece of plastic or soft surfaces like a t-shirt)

Still need help? Consult with a veterinarian to rule out a medical issue.

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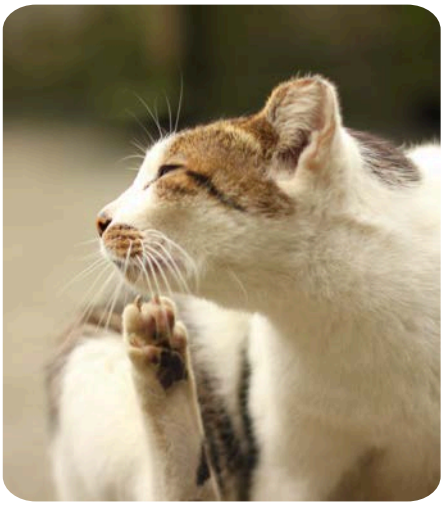
CARING FOR YOUR CAT

HEALTH

PARASITES



FLEAS

Fleas are tiny (1 to 3 mm) blood-sucking insects. They multiply quickly and can make your pet sick if left untreated. Fleas will bite people too!

How do I know if my cat has fleas?

Your cat will be itchy, and you might notice them scratch more than usual. Check your pet's belly where you might see fleas crawling. Gently pull apart the fur to expose the skin and check for what looks like pepper or coffee grinds – this is actually bits of dried blood!

How do I treat fleas?

Flea collars and powders may help but are not very effective. A monthly pill or topical liquids applied to the skin prescribed by your veterinarian can help stamp out fleas.

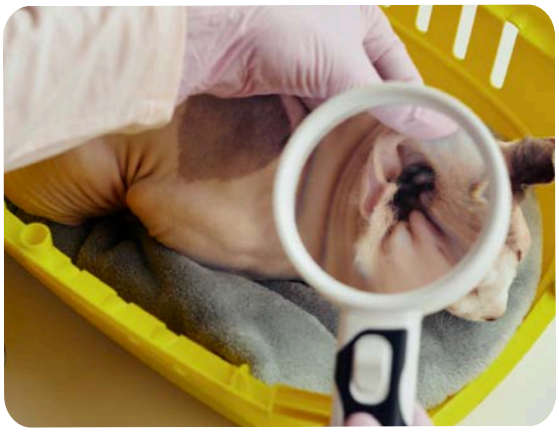
WARNING: Flea medication

You can find flea treatments for dogs at pet stores that contain **permethrin**, which is okay for dogs but **poisonous to cats**! Do not share treatments with other pets.

WORMS (including tapeworms, whipworms and roundworms)

Worms from your cat can be transferred to people! **GROSS.** It's important to look out for signs of worms and get them treated by a veterinarian right away.

Signs of worms? You might see them in the poop or vomit. In some cases, you might see them crawling out of a cat's bum, or you might see eggs (clear, rice-shaped) in their bedding. But don't worry – there is a simple fix. Medication for worms can be obtained from your vet.



EAR MITES & EAR INFECTIONS

Ear mites are teeny-tiny creatures that live inside your pet's ears. They are common and contagious. If one pet has ear mites, it's likely that they all do.

How to detect if your cat has ear mites?

Your cat may rub their ears on the ground and shake their heads. You may even see a brown, waxy or crusty buildup in your cat's ear. This could be ear mites or a bacterial or yeast infection.

Ear mites and infections can be diagnosed and treated with medication prescribed by a veterinarian.

TOXOPLASMOSIS

Toxoplasmosis is an infection caused by a tiny parasite that can infect people and animals. Most healthy people and animals won't get sick. Your cat could infect you through contact with their poop, but this is rare. People are much more likely to get it from handling and/or eating raw or undercooked food and unwashed fruits and vegetables.

Pregnant women (it can affect the baby) and people with compromised immune systems are more at risk, but you can reduce risk by wearing gloves and washing your hands after handling litter.

If you have concerns about your health, talk to your doctor.

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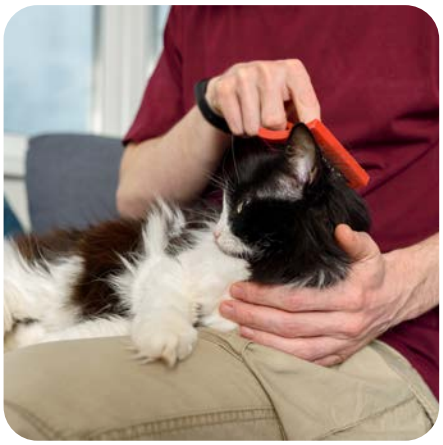
CARING FOR YOUR CAT

HEALTH

GROOMING



FUR

Your cat's fur should look clean, groomed and free from debris. Cats generally keep themselves clean, but regular brushing helps to prevent fur from matting (getting tangled) and removes loose fur – especially for longer-haired cats. Regular grooming will also prevent your cat from throwing up hairballs.

NAILS

Your cat's nails need to be trimmed about once a month.

IDENTIFICATION

If your cat ever gets lost, make sure they have proper ID in the form of a collar and tags, microchip or tattoo, which can be done by a veterinarian during the time of spay or neuter.

MYTH BUSTING

Does a microchip act like a tracker or global positioning device (GPS)?

ANSWER: NO! Microchips use radio frequency and are only activated when scanned by a special device. They only provide information stored in the microchip – your contact information to help get your cat back to you!

EQUIPMENT

CAT COLLARS

If your cat goes outside, makes sure they have a collar with ID tag and make sure the collar has a quick-release buckle. This will keep your outdoor explorer safe from getting caught on anything.

CAT HARNESSES & LEASHES

Walking cats on a leash is possible! If you are willing to get your cat used to wearing a harness and going out to explore, it can be very enjoyable for both you and your cat.

Some tips:

- Start in your home and slowly move to different rooms or quiet indoor spaces
- When you go out, start with short sessions in quiet places
- Bring a soft-sided carrier with you so that if your cat gets scared, they can quickly hide inside
- Make sure your cat has ID

Signs that your cat feels okay outside:

-relaxed body
-exploring and interested
-walks a bit and then lays down or explores

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CARING FOR YOUR CAT
HEALTH

SPAY/NEUTER

BENEFITS

- Neutered cats are less likely to spray, wander and get into fights
- Spaying ends the heat cycle in females, so no more yowling, spraying or trying to escape
- Eliminates the risk of many cancers
- Studies show that fixed pets, on average, live longer

PREVENT UNWANTED LITTERS

Kittens can have kittens! Start keeping unfixed males and females apart at four months old. **GET YOUR KITTEN FIXED BY SIX MONTHS OLD.**

It's irresponsible to breed your cat. Without proper support from a veterinarian throughout the pregnancy, you put your cat's health at risk. When your cat gives birth, you need to be able to access an emergency clinic in case anything goes wrong. When kittens are born, they need proper monitoring and should see a vet by six weeks of age or sooner if any issues arise.

MEDICAL CARE

It's recommended that your cat have a check-up once a year with a veterinarian. If not, watch out for lumps and bumps, changes to your cat's eating and washroom habits, and other changes in their behaviour and routines. If you notice something different, get in touch with a veterinarian.

VACCINES

Vaccines protect your cat from getting diseases that are contagious and potentially fatal. Vaccinating your cat offers protection for your cat and cats in the community. When you get your cat or when a kitten turns six weeks old, visit your veterinarian for a check-up and vaccine plan.

Kittens should start their vaccines at six to eight weeks of age. They will need a series of vaccines before they reach four months old. Schedules for adult cats may vary depending on lifestyle and vaccines needed.

COMMON CAT VACCINES

- FVRCP (feline viral rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, panleukopenia)
- Feline Leukemia
- Rabies

DEWORMING

Cats can get all sorts of different intestinal worms and some may be transferred to humans! Talk to your veterinarian about regular treatments to prevent worms.

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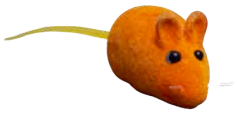
CARING FOR YOUR CAT
KEEPING YOUR CAT HAPPY

Cats love to play, explore, run around, use a scratching post and spend time with you. These are all essential activities for cats. Set up your home so your cat can explore, run and scratch on a scratching post.

Make time in your day to play with your cat with a variety of toys. Keep you and your loved ones safe and avoid using your hands as a toy.



TOYS & GAMES

There are lots of toys to choose from. Pick a variety and roll, bat and wave them around to encourage your cat to play.

Cats love to hunt. **Hide treats or kibble** around your home for your cat to find.

Food puzzles will make mealtime more fun and encourage your cat to use their mind and work for their food.

Plant a pot of indoor greens for your cat to munch on such as cat grass from seeds (oat, rye, wheat, barley) or catnip.

SCRATCHING

Provide your cat a scratching post and toys. Put it near doorways, a window or hang them from a piece of furniture your cat likes to scratch.

PERCHING

Cats love to perch up high, especially by a window! Check your local pet store for a cat perch that you can install on your window.

HIDING

Sometimes cats just need to get away from it all. Give your cat plenty of places to hide, like cardboard boxes, cupboards and paper bags.

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CARING FOR YOUR CAT
LIVING WITH INTACT CATS

KITTENS CAN HAVE KITTENS!

Cats can start reproducing at 5 to 9 months of age, which is when you may start to see hormone-driven behaviour problems. It is recommended to **separate intact females and males at four months old**. Unwanted behaviours in intact cats include humping, urine marking (also known as spraying), yowling and roaming.

The best way to tackle these unwanted behaviours is to get your cat spayed or neutered.

FEMALE HEAT CYCLES

Females have **heat cycles several times a year** and each can **last from 4 to 20 days**. Signs include:

- She is suddenly more friendly and starts to seek more attention
- When you pet her, she presents her rear end
- She rolls around on the ground more
- Marking behaviour with her cheeks or urine (spraying)
- Unusual yowling, especially at night, restlessness and less interest in food

INTACT MALES

Intact males will be on the prowl all the time and are more likely to spray and they will hump other animals, people or objects like furniture.

GOT A HUMPER?
Engage your cat in another activity like a wand toy, food puzzle or chase game.

HELPFUL TIPS

Urine marking (or spraying) is stinky! Getting your cat spayed or neutered is the best way to prevent this.
Spaying or neutering will end this issue in more than 95% of females and 90% of males.

TIPS FOR LIVING WITH AN INTACT CAT

No outdoor access! This includes wandering in apartment hallways.

You need to keep **males and females in separate rooms at all times**. If this isn't possible, try asking a friend or neighbour to help out.

Can't stand the smell of your cat spraying all around the house? Look for an **enzymatic cleaner** available at pet stores or on many online sites. Regular cleaning products or even vinegar could make it worse and encourage your cat to spray.

Keep **multiple litter boxes** (number of cats in home + 1) in your home. Clean them daily and use non-scented clumping litter.

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