



# A LIFETIME OF WELLNESS

CARING FOR YOUR NEW COMPANION



# VACCINATION PROGRAM

Regular physical examinations and vaccinations can help your kitten live a healthy, happy life. You can help protect your kitten from the following common infectious diseases by following your veterinarian's recommended immunization schedule.

**VETERINARIAN'S NAME**

**PHONE NUMBER**

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**PET'S NAME**

**BIRTH DATE**

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## **DISTEMPER**

Also called Panleukopenia, this is a highly contagious viral disease that can be spread through air, contact with infected animals or even contact with places infected animals have been. Symptoms can be any, or all, of the following: weight loss, severe depression, dehydration, loss of appetite, an intense desire for water, vomiting and diarrhea.

## **UPPER RESPIRATORY DISEASE**

A number of highly contagious viral infections displaying flu-like or "cold" symptoms. Signs include sneezing, depression, discharge from eyes and ears, fever and ulcers in the mouth. The vaccination protects against the following Upper Respiratory Diseases: calicivirus, rhinotracheitis and pneumonitis.

## **RABIES**

A fatal viral infection of the central nervous system that affects mammals, including humans. Though it is usually transmitted through the bite of an infected animal, it can be spread when the saliva of the rabid animal comes in contact with broken skin. Rabies vaccinations are required in most states.

## **FELINE LEUKEMIA (FeLV)**

One of the leading causes of feline death. This virus causes a variety of problems including immunosuppression, chronic anemia, leukemia and solid tumors. FeLV can be spread through contact with infected blood or saliva.

## **FELINE IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS (FIV)**

This virus weakens your cat's immune system. Affected cats are more susceptible to other diseases and infections. FIV is similar to the human virus HIV and causes AIDS-like illness in cats; however, there has been no evidence that it can be transmitted to humans.

## **FELINE INFECTIOUS PERITONITIS (FIP)**

Caused by a virus which interacts with the kitten's immune system. Kittens may be infected before birth. Most transmission of the virus is from the feces or urine of infected cats.

Help protect your pet from these diseases with a regular health care program recommended by your veterinarian.

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# A NEW ADVENTURE

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Whether your new family member is a rambunctious kitten or a more laid-back adult cat, this handbook will help you get her off to a healthy start.

This book is not intended as a substitute for professional veterinary medical care, but it should provide you with valuable information about your cat at any life stage. We wish you many wonderful years with your new pet.

As the new owner of a cat, you are at the beginning of a great adventure. Get ready for lots of fun and many opportunities to help shape your furry friend's life and health.



# A HEALTHY ADVANTAGE

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3 FACTORS  
WILL INFLUENCE  
THE LENGTH OF  
YOUR CAT'S LIFE:  
GENETICS,  
NUTRITION  
AND CARE.

Three factors will influence the length of your cat's life: genetics, nutrition and care. While genetics are determined at conception, you still have a great deal of influence on the length and quality of your pet's life in many other ways. Provide her with excellent nutrition, veterinary care and training, and help your cat grow to be a healthy, happy pet and a faithful companion.

Knowing the basic facts about feline behavior and care will help you establish a good relationship with your cat. Take some time to learn about caring for your new cat and how to make your home safe for her. This can help ease the transition for her, and for the rest of your family.

WELCOME

# HOME

Kittens and cats are lively and curious. These are endearing qualities; however, they can lead your pet into serious trouble. Here are tips on how to make your home a truly welcoming and safe place for your new friend.





# BRINGING YOUR NEW KITTEN OR NEW CAT HOME

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Remember, your new pet looks to you for direction, comfort and protection. Everything is new to her, so she may be shy and even hide from you at first. Be patient. Talk to her. Kittens and adult cats may not know people vocabulary, but they soon learn to respond to your voice and commands. Speak to your cat often and gently, and always treat her kindly.

## INTRODUCING YOUR CAT TO OTHER PETS

Introduce any other pets in your home to your cat with care and caution. Introductions through a closed door will help each one become familiar with the scent of the other. Using treats and/or play can help associate pleasant things with the presence of another cat. An older cat, male or female, will usually accept a new kitten and may eventually help take care of her. Because kittens are rambunctious and may bother an older cat, do not leave them alone together until you are sure they can tolerate each other.

Many dogs and cats also get along, but this may take a little longer. Introductions should be controlled and safe. Dogs should be on a leash that is held by an adult and never allowed to chase or bark at the kitten. There may be some hissing and perhaps some barking, but with time and caution they usually will accept one another. Again, it's smart not to leave them together unattended until you are sure they will behave appropriately with each other.

But whether your older pet is a dog or a cat, remember to set aside special time to show her extra love and affection as she adjusts to the new addition in your home. And don't force your older animal to accept your cat immediately. Let her do it at her own pace.



## Did you know?

A cat's paw pads are very sensitive, so touching them can be annoying for a cat. Leave her paws alone and pet her on the head or back where it's more pleasurable.

## Owner responsibility

Being a responsible pet owner means preventing your cat from wandering into your neighbor's yard. Responsible ownership also includes spaying and neutering your pet to avoid unwanted kittens.

## INTRODUCING YOUR CAT TO CHILDREN

If there are children in your house, especially small ones, introduce your cat to them in short, supervised periods. Frequent handling and gentle playing are important, but children must understand that your cat is a living creature. Demonstrate to your children how to pick her up and hold her. Slip one hand under her chest, holding the front legs gently but firmly with your fingers. At the same time, cup the other hand under her hindquarters. Never pick your cat up by the scruff of the neck or by her legs. Children must learn not to pull the cat's tail or ears; squeeze or poke her; make loud, threatening noises; or go toward her too rapidly.

A good way for both children and adults to play with a cat is to get down on the floor at her level to make her feel more secure. Remind children that the smallest child can look like a giant to a cat. Even a gentle cat may resort to scratching or biting to protect herself if she's frightened. Also avoid placing your new kitten or young cat in situations such as large family gatherings, which can be overwhelming.

# SUPPLIES YOU WILL NEED

Make sure you have basic supplies on hand that your cat will need. They are all relatively inexpensive and some can even be homemade.



## CARRIER

A carrier is a must for transporting your kitten or cat. It will keep her safe while riding in a car and give her a sense of security. Carriers come in many styles and materials, ranging from soft, leather-like nylon or mesh to a more durable polypropylene construction. Whatever you select, make sure it is:

- » Large enough so your cat can comfortably stand up and turn around;
- » Well-ventilated, secure and easy to clean

When using the carrier, cover the bottom with an old towel. The familiar scent should comfort your cat as she travels. Leaving the carrier out when you are home will help the cat become familiar with it.



## FOOD & WATER BOWLS

Bowls should be easy to clean and heavy enough so they don't tip over. Some cats are allergic to plastic. Stainless steel or ceramic bowls are ideal. Make sure your cat always has plenty of clean, fresh water. Wash her bowl daily. If you have more than one cat, use several bowls in multiple locations.

## Checklist

- » Carrier
- » Food and water bowls
- » Litter box materials
- » Bed
- » Scratching post
- » Collar
- » Grooming tools
- » Toys



## SCRATCHING POST

Contrary to popular belief, cats do not use a scratching post to sharpen their claws. They use it for exercise (to stretch out to their full length), to clean away dead scales from their nails and to mark their territory, both visually and with their scent. Get a scratching post right away to help train your cat early, and place it in a prominent area that both your cat and your family use regularly.

The scratching post should be sturdy and tall enough to let your cat stretch out full length. You can make one with some wood and old carpeting or purchase one from a pet store. Most cats prefer material that can rip and tear, such as burlap.



## LITTER BOX MATERIALS

You will need a litter box, litter box liners, cat box filler and a scoop. Even if you have a cat that goes outdoors, choose a litter box big enough for a full-grown cat and deep enough so your cat will not scatter contents around when she scratches in it. Kittens may initially need a smaller box with lower sides so they can get in and out of it easily. To keep your litter box fresh, use a scoop, strainer or sieve to

remove soiled filler daily. Wash the pan once a week with soap and water and add fresh litter. Don't use strong disinfectants containing ammonia; they are not necessary for health and they may offend your cat's sensitive nose. Once a month after washing, put the box outdoors to dry in the fresh air. Always wash your hands thoroughly after handling the litter box. Old litter boxes should be discarded and new ones provided regularly.

## BED

Some cats like to have a bed of their own, while others will choose places in the home. Until you discover your cat's preferences, you may want to create a bed from a cardboard box or simply arrange a blanket. Place the bed in a quiet, draft-free area away from household traffic.

## Important

Humans may come in contact with a parasite called *Toxoplasma gondii* from cat feces while cleaning out the litter box. Wear gloves while changing your cat's litter and always wash your hands immediately afterward. Pregnant women should not change the litter box, since the disease toxoplasmosis, caused by *toxoplasma*, can cause severe birth defects. We recommend that a non-pregnant family member clean and change the litter box.

## Toys

Toys don't have to be store bought. Use your imagination. Some great playthings include the following:

- » Table tennis ball
- » Empty wooden thread spool
- » Balled-up waxed paper
- » Cardboard toilet paper tube
- » Empty shoe box

Some items you may be tempted to give your cat could be harmful. Keep the following away from your cat:

- » Balls of string or yarn
- » Spools of thread
- » Rubber bands/paper clips/pens
- » Balls of aluminum foil or cellophane
- » Corks
- » Wire twist ties



### GROOMING TOOLS

You will need a flea comb for either a longhaired or shorthaired cat, but the type of brush will depend on the length and texture of your cat's coat. Start grooming her right away, so it becomes part of your cat's usual routine.



### COLLAR

In the event your cat accidentally escapes from your home, she should always wear a safety collar with an identification tag. Make sure she begins wearing one early on, so she becomes used to the sensation. The safety collar should be made of breakaway material, so that your cat will not choke if she catches it on a tree limb, fence or other object. Your cat can also be identified with a microchip under the skin. Consult your veterinarian for information on this lifesaving identification process.



### TOYS

Because cats will play with anything that moves, rolls, rustles or sways, they need a supply of toys that are safe and fun. Choose toys made especially for cats — ones that cannot be splintered, torn apart or swallowed. A celluloid ball that rattles, a catnip mouse or a hard rubber mouse is perfect. Many cats like playing with wand-type toys that flutter and move when activated by their caregivers. To avoid accidents, some cat toys should be used only when you are playing with your cat. Also avoid anything with hard, sharp points that can break off. Be wary of toys (or items that a cat may see as a toy) that can break — for example, Christmas tree ornaments. Be careful not to give her anything small made of soft rubber, fur, wool, sponge or polyurethane. Avoid all toys with squeakers, which might be swallowed.

# KEEPING YOUR KITTEN OR CAT SAFE

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It's difficult to absolutely cat-proof your home against accidents, but there are a number of things you can do to help keep your cat safe.

- » Securely screen all windows to help prevent falls. Keep your cat off balconies, upper porches and high decks.
- » Securely store poisonous materials. Keep these in tightly closed areas where your cat cannot gain access. Remember, cats are resourceful and have been known to open cabinets and doors. Some common materials that are poisonous to cats include the following:
  - »Antifreeze
  - »Cleaning supplies
  - »Disinfectants
  - »Fertilizer
  - »Laundry detergent and bleach
  - »Medications
  - »Mothballs
  - »Paint and paint thinner
  - »Pesticides and insect repellent
  - »Rodent poison
- » Keep toilet lids down. Cats may play in the water and the lid could close and trap them. Also, residual toilet bowl cleanser left in the bowl is harmful if swallowed.
- » Store plastic bags away from your cat. She could get trapped inside and suffocate, or she might chew and swallow bits of plastic, which could be dangerous.
- » Cats can get tangled in plastic six-pack beverage holders. Cut the holders apart and discard them to prevent this problem.
- » Keep exposed electrical cords as short as possible, or secure them against a baseboard so your cat can't play with or chew them.
- » Store sewing and knitting supplies out of your cat's reach. Buttons, needles, pins, yarn and thread can all hurt her mouth or internal organs if swallowed. The same goes for nails, screws and other small, sharp objects.
- » Never use electric blankets to line your cat's bed. She could be electrocuted if she chews the wires.

Remove poisonous houseplants or place them in hanging baskets completely out of your cat's reach. Your veterinarian or university agricultural extension service can give you a complete list of dangerous plants.

Keeping your cat indoors provides the ultimate safety. Outdoor cats are exposed to disease, fights with other animals, automobiles and the possibility of becoming lost. Indoor cats tend to live longer, healthier lives. But indoor cats need daily exercise, play and enrichment to meet their needs.

# FEEDING

## YOUR CAT

Mealtime is one of the most exciting events in your cat's day. It can also be fun for you, allowing you to provide complete nutrition to help keep your pet healthy and giving you an opportunity to bond with her. But don't let your cat get too much of a good thing — talk with your veterinarian about the right amount to feed, and be sure to measure your cat's food to help her maintain a healthy weight.



# WHY CATS AND KITTENS NEED SPECIAL NUTRITION

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A complete and balanced diet formulated for your cat's specific life stage is essential. Proper nutrition helps her develop and maintain strong bones; ideal body condition; thick, lustrous coat; bright eyes and healthy teeth. A malnourished cat is more susceptible to disease, infection and health problems.

Cats have specific nutritional requirements — for example, the essential amino acid, taurine. Insufficient amounts of taurine can impair vision and may cause heart problems. For cats' daily diets, adequate levels of high-quality protein are needed to help support normal growth, maintenance, and reproduction.

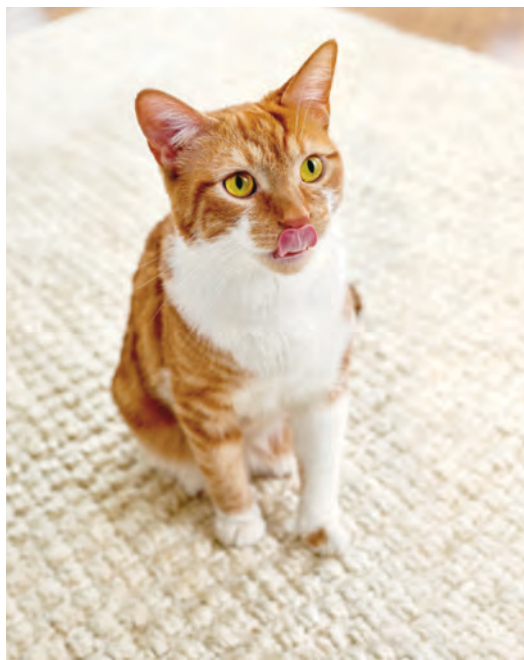
## READING THE LABEL

Be sure to read your cat food labeling carefully. The label provides a guaranteed analysis of key nutrients, including minimum protein and fat and the maximum fiber and moisture. It also should indicate if the food has undergone actual feeding studies.

The label should state whether your cat food is formulated for growth, maintenance, gestation/lactation or all life stages. Purina recognizes that your cat will have special needs at specific times. That's why there's a Purina® food to meet each life stage, with all the necessary vitamins, minerals, protein and other nutrients in proper amounts.

## WHERE, WHEN AND HOW MUCH TO FEED

Place your cat's food and water dishes away from foot traffic, noise and the litter box, in a place that is comfortable and easy to access. Newspaper or a plastic mat under the dish makes cleanup easier. For households with multiple cats, place multiple food bowls in different locations. Above all, always keep clean, fresh water available at all times.



## FEEDING TIPS

- » Establish a routine so that your cat is fed at the same time each day.
- » Use your cat's name when feeding her. This can help to reinforce her name while associating you with a pleasant activity.
- » If you are feeding a dry cat food, you can either put out a whole day's supply in the morning, or feed half in the morning and half at night. Another advantage of dry cat food is that it can help keep your cat's teeth clean and breath fresh.
- » Always measure the amount of food you give your cat. This will allow you to keep track of her food intake, monitor her health and guard against weight gain, which can have significant health consequences.

For a proper feeding program, start with the feeding instructions on the cat food package, but remember that these are only general guidelines. They should be adjusted to meet your cat's individual needs based on her age, activity level, environmental conditions and body condition. Check with your veterinarian for a recommendation.

## Feeding don'ts

- » Never feed dog food to your cat. Cats have unique nutritional needs that dog food does not provide.
- » Never feed bones to your cat. They can splinter or lodge in her throat or pierce the stomach wall and intestinal tract.
- » Never feed milk to your cat. She doesn't need it and it may cause diarrhea.
- » Never feed your cat any food containing chocolate or onions. These can be toxic to your cat.
- » Avoid the temptation to feed table scraps. This can produce a finicky eater who learns to refuse her usual cat food in favor of high-calorie tidbits, which can lead to obesity and health problems such as diabetes.

## Keep weight in check

Cats are less active than dogs and can be more susceptible to weight gain. Be sure to measure food, avoid feeding table scraps and play with your cat to help ensure she maintains a healthy weight.

## SPECIAL NUTRITION FOR YOUR KITTEN

Your kitten's first year is critical to a lifetime of good health. During that time, she grows from infancy through the equivalent of childhood and then to young adulthood. She needs to have the best possible nutrition to build a strong bone structure, good muscles, a well-developed nervous system and the vitality that will take her through her first year.

A normal kitten's weight practically triples during her first three weeks. In her first 20 weeks,

a kitten can have a 2,000% increase over her birth weight. At 26 weeks, the visible growth rate starts to level off and she may look like an adult cat. However, your kitten will continue to develop inside—her bones become stronger and her body fills out—until she is a year old.

Kittens, like babies, need their own special food. Your kitten's rapid growth and high energy level require food that will provide extra nutrition and calories.

## KITTEN NUTRITION TIMETABLE

For a proper feeding program, check the food package for the recommended amounts for various age levels. It's also a good idea to get your veterinarian's advice for your particular kitten's needs.

- » Give your kitten three meals a day, if at all possible, until she is 6 months old. At this point she can be fed twice a day — but remember, she is still a kitten and should continue eating a diet made especially for kittens.
- » By the time she is 7 months old, most of your kitten's permanent teeth should have arrived.
- » Once your kitten has reached her first birthday, she is officially an adult. The high-calorie requirements she had as a kitten have gradually declined, and she can now switch to an adult food.

## WHEN YOUR CAT HAS SPECIAL DIETARY NEEDS

Maintaining your cat's good health is a big responsibility, and one that's best shared with your veterinarian. At your cat's next regularly scheduled checkup, let your veterinarian know of any physical or behavioral changes in your pet. If your veterinarian discovers that your cat has a special condition, a therapeutic food from the Purina® Pro Plan® Veterinary Diets line may be recommended.

Purina Pro Plan Veterinary Diets formulas use the power of nutrition to help in the dietary management of cats and dogs with many different health conditions. All Purina Pro Plan Veterinary Diets formulas are based on quality nutrition and a deep commitment to continuous improvement.

## SUPPLEMENTS

Unless directed by your veterinarian, it's not necessary to add supplemental vitamins, minerals or other foods to your cat's daily diet. If she's eating a Purina® food, she is getting complete and balanced nutrition already.

## Switching foods

Although you'll want to get started feeding Purina right away, if you are switching diets, it's best to transition your cat from her current food over a 7 to 10-day period to avoid dietary upset. Simply feed a little less of the previous food each day and a little more of the new food, until you're feeding Purina exclusively. This is especially important when changing from a dry to a canned cat food.



## Staying healthy on the inside

Sometimes a diet change, stress or other factors can cause your cat to experience soft stools or diarrhea. Talk with your veterinarian to see if a probiotic such as Purina® Pro Plan® Veterinary Diets FortiFlora® Feline Probiotic Supplements is right for your pet. FortiFlora contains a probiotic that promotes normal intestinal microflora balance and can help get the GI system back on track. Easily sprinkled on food, it can be fed to kittens and adult cats.





## Important

Be sure to provide a bowl of fresh water daily for your cat. The water should be in a clean container and available to her at all times.

### TOO MANY POUNDS, TOO MANY PROBLEMS

Research shows that overweight cats are more likely to develop health problems — the incidence of diabetes, in particular, increases 3-5 fold in overweight cats.<sup>1</sup> In addition, overweight cats are prone to lameness, skin diseases, and liver and pancreatic diseases; are at risk for urinary tract and constipation problems; and are likely to experience osteoarthritis and ligament damage. So it is important for you, as the person who determines what and how much your cat eats, to feed her responsibly and help keep her weight in check.

### EXERCISE

An estimated 58% of cats in the United States are overweight or obese,<sup>2</sup> which places them at risk for a variety of health problems. A regular exercise program should go hand-in-hand with diet to help an obese cat lose weight; however, it is best to keep your cat from becoming overweight by feeding her healthy food and measuring quantities.

Besides its health benefits, exercising your cat is a great way for you to bond and have fun together. Here are some suggested activities to help your cat maintain good health or, if she is overweight, help her shed pounds and become

healthier and happier.

- » Get your cat up in the morning for playtime before you leave for work.
- » Put some distance between your cat and her food. If you leave dry food out, put it in a room apart from where your cat sleeps, and place toys along the way to encourage additional activity.
- » Offer part of the daily food allotment in a feeder toy that encourages manipulation to dispense the food.
- » Get your cat to run. Use wand toys and other types of toys to encourage movement.
- » Pamper your cat into a playful mood. When she isn't in the mood to play, boost her spirits with a brushing.
- » Leave safe toys out to encourage your cat to play on her own. This is important if you are away from home much of the day. Rotate the toys frequently to keep things interesting.

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<sup>1</sup>Hoening M. Comparative aspects of diabetes mellitus in dogs and cats. *Mol Cell Endocrinol* 2002;197(1-2):221-229.

<sup>2</sup>Association for Pet Obesity Prevention; 2014 National Pet Obesity Awareness Day Survey Dogs & Cats; <http://www.petobesityprevention.org>; June 2015

KEEPING  
YOUR CAT

# HEALTHY

Your veterinarian is your best resource when it comes to keeping your cat healthy. Annual checkups will enable your veterinarian to note any changes occurring from year to year, catch any issues early and keep your pet on a healthy track.





# PARTNER WITH A VETERINARIAN

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Regular veterinary visits should begin as soon as you acquire your new cat. Although kittens get some immunity from their mothers, this immunity begins to decrease soon after they are weaned. Kittens should be vaccinated against feline diseases and checked periodically for worms and other parasites. Your adult cat should also receive regular vaccinations on a timetable your veterinarian determines. Cats of all ages should have an annual medical examination.

## THE ROUTINE EXAM

During your visit, the veterinarian will check the condition of your cat's eyes and ears; listen to the sounds of her heart and breathing; feel her abdomen and coat; and inspect her mouth for disease or tooth tartar.

The veterinarian may require tests such as examination of a stool sample for internal parasites and blood tests to uncover disease. Regular tests and vaccinations are especially important during a kitten's first year.



# VACCINATIONS

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All cats, even indoor pets, need to be vaccinated. Your veterinarian will provide routine vaccinations for feline distemper and upper respiratory disease. Ask your veterinarian if your cat should be vaccinated against Feline Leukemia Virus (Felv) and Feline Infectious Peritonitis (FIP). Remember, some vaccines must be given as a series over a period of time, and many may require boosters.

Your cat's initial rabies vaccination is essential and should be given sometime between 3 and 4 months of age, depending on the vaccine.

Through various tests and vaccines, modern veterinary science can provide a degree of protection from many feline diseases.

# SPAYING/ NEUTERING

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**Unless you have acquired a purebred cat for breeding purposes, neutering or spaying is highly recommended.**

Neutering is a generic term that refers to the sterilization of male or female cats (also known as “spaying” for females). Unless you have acquired a purebred cat for breeding purposes, neutering is highly recommended.

Neutering is a responsible way to prevent the birth of unwanted litters and avoid undesirable behaviors. Many shelters and humane societies require this procedure before the cat can be adopted.

## A safety net

Comprehensive pet insurance can cover both regular veterinary visits and trips to emergency pet clinics. With this kind of coverage, you're ensuring your pet has access to routine wellness care as well as coverage if something occurs unexpectedly. Insuring your pet at the kitten stage provides coverage for early wellness needs such as initial vaccinations, spaying/neutering and microchipping.

## NEUTERING (MALE)

Neutering is the surgical removal of the male cat's testicles.

- » If not neutered, your male cat may exhibit an uncontrollable urge to roam by the time he turns 1 year old.
- » As he grows older, he may develop the habit of spraying walls and furniture with streams of urine as a way of claiming territory. Once sprayed, furniture may be impossible to deodorize.
- » Ideally, a male kitten should be neutered around 6 months, before he acquires the "spraying" habit. However, neutering an older cat still is definitely worthwhile, since it should weaken, if not eliminate, those unpleasant tomcat traits.

## SPAYING (FEMALE)

Spaying is the surgical removal of the female cat's uterus and ovaries.

- » After spaying, she will not experience heat cycles or become pregnant.
- » Most veterinarians feel that 5 to 6 months of age, before your cat has her first heat, is the ideal time for spaying.
- » When a cat is in heat, she becomes restless, nervous and tense. She may roll on the floor frequently and appear more demanding. Her voice may also become more piercing and she may attempt to get outdoors to find a mate.

## ONCE YOUR CAT HAS BEEN SPAYED:

- » She will probably be more relaxed, playful and affectionate.
- » She may become less nervous and noisy.
- » Spaying a female cat also helps reduce the risk of breast cancer, pyometra (a life-threatening uterine infection), tumors of the reproductive system, and conditions related to hormonal imbalances.

# MONITORING YOUR CAT'S HEALTH

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Developing a good working relationship with your cat's veterinarian is important, and getting to know what is normal for your cat is crucial. If you are able to recognize abnormal behavior, you might be able to help your veterinarian discover the source of your cat's problem.

A healthy cat has the following characteristics:

**EYES** Bright and clear, without signs of irritation or red or yellow discoloration and no evidence of tearing or cloudiness. If discharge collects in the corners of her eyes, clean them with a cotton ball moistened with warm water.

**MOUTH** Pink, healthy gums with no redness or swelling, no bad breath and no sores or growths on lips.

**EARS** Clean and free of odor or discharge. Check for ear mites. Use cotton balls (not cotton swab sticks) moistened with water for routine ear cleaning. Ask your veterinarian to show you how. Be very careful; your cat's ears are fragile.

**NOSE** Clean and free of discharge or sores.

**COAT AND BODY** Smooth body with thick, shiny, silky coat. Feel for lumps, tumors and ticks; check the coat for fleas, greasiness, dandruff or bare patches.

**ANUS** Free from swelling or evidence of internal parasites.

## Maintaining your cat's health

Kittens and young cats are hardy creatures, but they still need regular veterinary care, special nutrition, and lots of love and attention. A kitten gets some temporary immunity from her mother's milk; however, regular visits to the veterinarian should begin soon after weaning when the mother's natural immunity leaves off, and to ensure that your kitten grows up healthy and content.

Soon you will become familiar with what is normal behavior for your cat. This will help you more easily detect unusual behaviors that you might want to discuss with your veterinarian.

# SYMPTOMS OF ILLNESS

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Even with good care, your cat may not always be in the best of health. She may have a flurry of sneezes or a coughing spell. She may vomit occasionally, even if she is not seriously ill. But if these signs persist, don't ignore them. Take her to the veterinarian right away. A change in behavior is often the first sign of illness.

Other signs that indicate your cat may need veterinary attention include the following:

- » Diarrhea that persists for more than 24 hours or accompanies other signs of illness.
- » Constipation that persists for more than 24 hours.
- » Persistent vomiting or vomiting of greenish-yellow bile; or vomiting blood that colors the vomit dark red, brown or black.
- » Labored breathing or panting.
- » Straining to urinate or blood in the urine.
- » Acute swelling or small body lumps that gradually increase in size.
- » Lameness or pain.
- » Loss of appetite for more than 24 hours.
- » Sudden weight loss or weight gain.
- » A dull, patchy coat that sheds heavily.
- » Red, watery eyes or nasal discharge.
- » Lying or crouching listlessly.
- » Failure to groom herself.
- » Not using the litter box, or using an inappropriate location.
- » Hiding in dark places.
- » Resents or resists handling.
- » Scratching or biting by a normally even-tempered kitten or cat.
- » Anything that is unusual for your cat.

# PARASITES

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Parasite checks must be conducted early and often, since mother cats can transmit parasites to their kittens. Parasites are organisms that can live in or on another living thing.

As with most health problems, prevention of parasites is easier, less expensive and less bothersome than treatment. So be alert for early signs.

## INTERNAL PARASITES

Internal parasites usually live in a cat's digestive system; an examination of your cat's stool can detect them. Treatment can begin as early as 6 weeks of age and be repeated at two- to three-week intervals, as determined by your veterinarian. The veterinarian also will do one or more fecal parasite checks within this period. Common internal parasites in cats include the following:

- » Tapeworms
- » Hookworms
- » Roundworms
- » Coccidia

**TOXOPLASMOSIS** is a serious disease caused by a parasite that is dangerous to humans as well. Since toxoplasmosis can cause severe birth defects in humans, pregnant women should not change the litter box.

## EXTERNAL PARASITES

External parasites live on your cat's body. These are diagnosed by physical examination and by tests run on your cat's skin. Parasites can make life miserable for you and your cat; however, there is much you can do to prevent and treat them. Remember that because cats lick themselves as part of normal grooming, certain combinations of over-the-counter products could be harmful. So, always ask your veterinarian about the best way to combat external parasites. Common external parasites in cats include the following:

- » Fleas
- » Ticks and lice
- » Ear mites
- » Mange



### **If your cat has fleas**

- » Contact your veterinarian for the most effective flea treatment.
- » Wash your cat's bedding in hot, soapy water.
- » Clean the carpeting with a commercial rug cleaner, safe for cats.
- » Vacuum thoroughly and throw away vacuum cleaner bags afterward.
- » Use flea-killing room foggers according to your veterinarian's instructions to make sure all newly born fleas are destroyed.
- » Consult a professional exterminator if the problem gets out of hand.

# MANAGING MEDICATION

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Your veterinarian may prescribe oral medication for a sick cat. Following are some tips to make giving medication easier.

## PILL

- » Place your cat on an elevated surface, such as a countertop, washer or dryer.
- » Wrap your cat's body and legs in a towel, leaving her head exposed.
- » Grasp her head, pressing opposite sides of her upper jaw. Pull her head gently backward until her nose points straight up.
- » Pull down your cat's lower front teeth, then drop the pill on the back of her tongue.
- » Close your cat's mouth and stroke her throat soothingly.
- » As you stroke her throat, be alert for a swallowing motion. Cats are clever at hiding pills in their mouth and may spit them out.
- » Reward her with a food tidbit for compliance.

## LIQUID

- » Wrap your cat's body and legs in a towel, leaving her head exposed. Hold her head.
- » With a medicine dropper, gently squirt a small amount of medicine into the side of her mouth.
- » Stroke her throat to stimulate swallowing.

Never grab your cat while she is eating or in the litter box to administer medication, since it may make her avoid these areas and result in other problems such as not using the litter box.

## Dangerous drugs

Never give your cat any medication without first consulting your veterinarian. Among the drugs dangerous to cats are aspirin, ibuprofen, acetaminophen, diet pills, sleeping pills and tranquilizers. Make sure these and any other medications labeled "keep out of the reach of children" are kept out of the reach of your cat, too.

# GROOMING

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## BRUSHING

To groom your cat, comb or brush her gently from head to tail, being especially careful around the chest and belly. Use a soft brush to remove loose hair. A variety of brushes and combs are available, so use ones most appropriate for your pet's coat. A short-haired cat may need brushing only once a week, while long-haired breeds require more frequent sessions. Brushing removes dead hair and skin, spreads out the natural oils in your cat's coat, and helps prevent hairballs.

## BATHING

Cats usually bathe themselves, but sometimes a bath with shampoo (be sure to use one made especially for cats) and water may be in order. Cats do not like to get wet, so bathing is something that's usually dreaded. Protect your cat's sensitive ears with cotton and lay a towel or rubber mat on the bottom of the tub. Gently rinse warm water over your cat, pour on a bit of shampoo that is made especially for cats, and lather. Be sure to rinse out all the shampoo. Towel dry until your cat is just damp.

## NAIL CLIPPING

Clipping your cat's nails helps maintain her health; protects against sharp scratches; and helps make sure she doesn't get caught in carpeting and soft furniture. Never use scissors to trim your cat's claws; use special cat nail clippers. Have your veterinarian or groomer show you how to handle them correctly to avoid cutting the vein in the claws. If you have any doubts, have your veterinarian or groomer do it. Clipping the nails on only one or two feet at a time, rather than trying to trim all four feet, may be more successful and less stressful for your cat.

The question of whether or not to declaw your cat is an important one that you should discuss with your veterinarian. With time, effort and proper placement of scratching posts, most cats can learn to leave owner possessions alone.

# TAKING YOUR CAT ALONG

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A carrier is a must for transporting your kitten or cat. It will keep her safe while riding in a car and give her a sense of security. Make sure it is large enough so your cat can comfortably stand up and turn around, and is well-ventilated and secure. Cover the bottom with an old towel to keep your cat comfortable. When in the car, make sure your cat is always in her carrier. If she is prone to motion sickness, be sure to ask your veterinarian for medication well in advance of your trip.

Most airlines require pets be examined by a veterinarian no more than 10 days prior to the date of travel. Whether traveling by road or air, be ready to present health and rabies certificates when asked.

## BOARDING YOUR CAT

If you decide your cat is better off at a boarding facility, choose one carefully. For instance, some veterinarians have special boarding areas for healthy animals, others do not. Ask your veterinarian to recommend a reputable place. Or get names from friends who have boarded their pets. Inspect the facilities and make reservations well in advance. When possible, use a facility that has a separate location for dogs and cats, especially for cats unfamiliar with dogs. You should always take your cat's present pet food to the boarding facility so she doesn't have to experience the additional stress of adjusting to a sudden diet change.

## IMPORTANT REMINDER

Be sure your cat's vaccinations are up-to-date. Your veterinarian will issue health and rabies certificates you may need, if you travel by plane. Such certificates also will be necessary if you board your cat, since most boarding facilities require proof of immunization.

## LEAVING YOUR CAT AT HOME

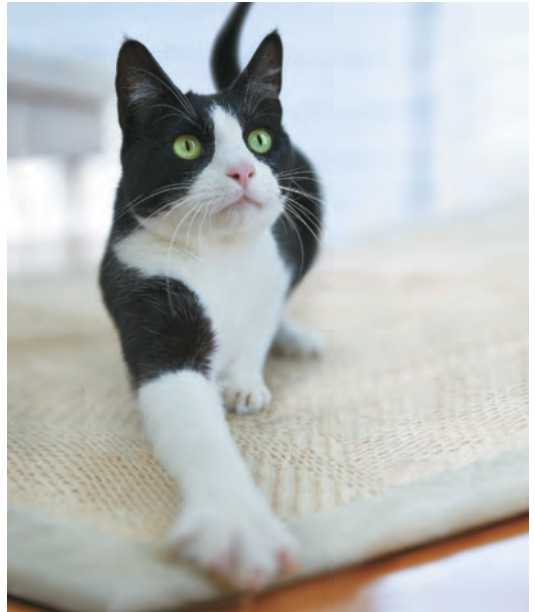
If you are to be gone only overnight or for two nights at the most, consider leaving your cat in her own home. Food should be no problem, especially if you are feeding a dry cat food. Leave an adequate supply, using two bowls if necessary and your cat can nibble to her heart's content when she feels the urge to eat. Make sure you leave plenty of water in a clean bowl. Clean her litter box and put in fresh filler, and perhaps provide an extra box so that a clean elimination area is always available. Have someone come in daily to check on your cat and keep her from being lonely.

You may want to hire a cat sitter for a longer trip away from home. Leave feeding instructions, schedule for cleaning the litter box, veterinarian's name and number, plus a number where you can be reached.

## Easing the carrier ordeal

Getting your cat into a carrier can be frustrating, both for you and for her. Though it may never be completely stress-free, there are steps you can take to improve the process.

- » Leave the carrier out and open in an easily accessible area for several days before traveling so your cat becomes familiar with it.
- » Create a comfortable environment inside the carrier with blankets, toys or an article of clothing from a favorite person.
- » Reinforce your cat's positive associations with the carrier using treats, food and calm praise.
- » Once she is comfortable with the carrier, take your cat for a few short car rides. Make sure the experience is positive.
- » Withhold food before the trip and drape a blanket or towel over the carrier to reduce motion sickness.



# TRAINING

## YOUR CAT

Felines are well-known for their independent nature. However, with time and patience, you can teach your kitten or cat the rules of the house. Be sure to be consistent in training and establish clear rules and expectations for behavior.



# HANDLING YOUR KITTEN

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Throughout your cat's life, you will need to handle her to groom her, trim her claws, check for any problems and perhaps give medication. These will all be easier if you get your kitten used to being handled on a regular basis. When the kitten is calm, gently run your hands over her feet and body, while talking softly to her. Look into her ears and perhaps even open her mouth. Reward her with praise, petting and tiny food tidbits. Keep the session short and end it before she gets agitated and attempts to escape. This will help your kitten learn to trust you and allow you to care for her.

If you have adopted an older cat, be sure you spend quality time with her, petting her and getting her used to being handled.

# LEARNING ABOUT THE LITTER BOX

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Litter box training should be easy for you and your cat. Most cats naturally feel the urge to dig as early as 4 weeks of age. If you interfere with your cat while she's in her litter box, she may develop an aversion to using it, so be patient and allow privacy and quiet.

Most kittens will act instinctively in the litter box; however, always keep the box clean. To keep your litter box fresh, use a scoop, strainer or sieve to remove soiled filler daily.

Once a week, wash the pan with soap and water and add fresh litter. Place the box in a quiet location that your cat can get to at all times. In large homes, more than one litter box may be necessary if your cat has access to the entire house.

Watch your cat very carefully, especially when she wakes up and after meals, and place her in her box every time she shows signs of being ready to use it.

Praise her to reinforce the fact that she's been good.

If your cat gets into the habit of using another location instead of, or in addition to, her litter box, it may be because:

- » the litter box is dirty,
- » you've changed the type of litter,
- » the location isn't convenient or there's too much traffic near it, or
- » there are not enough boxes for the number of cats in the home.

If this behavior continues, talk to your veterinarian to make sure it's not caused by a medical problem. Urinary tract disorders can cause pain, burning and a constant urge to urinate, even when the bladder is not full. A cat with an infection may be forced to pass a small amount of urine whenever and wherever the urge strikes. Such conditions should be treated by your veterinarian immediately.

Ask yourself whether her litter box lapses may be caused by stress. Try to find out what is causing the problem: is it a new baby in the house, a new type of cat litter, a new litter box or a change in diet? To make her feel more secure, allow quiet time and create special times for play and social interaction daily. If the problem persists, discuss the situation with your veterinarian.

### **Did you know?**

If your cat prefers water from the toilet, or from a puddle, gutter or pond, it may be because the water in her dish tastes bad. Provide plenty of clean fresh water daily! This is critical to a cat's health.

Some cats prefer to drink running water. Consider getting a water fountain designed specifically for cats. Be sure to change the fountain water daily.

### **Did you know?**

You may notice that your cat will groom herself more in warm weather. That's because the saliva she deposits on her fur while grooming acts as a cooling mechanism, much like sweat in humans.

## NIGHTTIME WOES

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Since cats are nocturnal (more active at dawn and dusk), your kitten or young cat may disturb you by playing at night. You can help alter this behavior by playing with your cat in the early evening to use up some of her excess energy. Feeding her last meal early also may help, since she'll probably get a burst of energy shortly after eating. Do not feed her or play with her if she awakens you; this only rewards the behavior. If your cat continues to be rambunctious while you sleep, try to find a separate, safe sleeping area for her.

## TALKING

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Loud or constant meowing, commonly called "talking," is often used as a means of communication by your cat. If she is lonely, anxious or has not had her social and play needs met, your cat will "talk" to you to try and get your attention.

Answer her cry by saying "hello," using her name and giving her the attention she's craving. Be wary of encouraging long conversations, because some cats may continue to vocalize when they are alone and bother your neighbors. If you are told that she "talks" while you are out, you may want to leave a radio playing to keep her company. Try rotating toys to help keep her occupied.

### Say no

If she continues to paw your hand, say "NO" in a stern voice, and quietly and quickly leave the area.

# AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

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Nipping can become a habit that you might be encouraging without even realizing it. When you tickle your cat's stomach and allow her to wrestle with your fingers, she will probably respond by nipping and scratching at your hand, just like she would any other toy or another cat. By allowing her to do this, you're reinforcing inappropriate behavior and teaching her that hand biting is allowed.

Never encourage your cat to play aggressively. If she tries to nip or scratch your hand, disengage by gently pushing toward her and making a loud noise to distract her. (If you try to pull away, she'll hang on even more tightly.) Give her toys instead of your hand. Leave her alone for a few minutes. Return after she has calmed down and try playing with her again using a proper toy.

Don't ever hit your cat or squirt her with water. This can damage the bond you are establishing with her and may create fear and anxiety. If she doesn't respond to your stern voice and social isolation, consult your veterinarian. There may be a physical ailment or deeper problem.

# IMPROVING BEHAVIOR

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Kitten and cat behavior is largely based on instinct and learning. The way you react to your cat will affect her habits for life. Cats are sensitive to your tone of voice. If you catch her acting inappropriately, clap your hands and say "NO." That's usually enough to stop her.

Some misbehavior occurs just because your cat wants to play and is not having her social needs met. Be sure to provide diversions such as safe toys, a box, a crumpled piece of paper or a plastic golf ball, and rotate toys often to keep them interesting. Providing a window perch or climbing tower will allow your cat to engage in normal climbing behaviors in an appropriate way.





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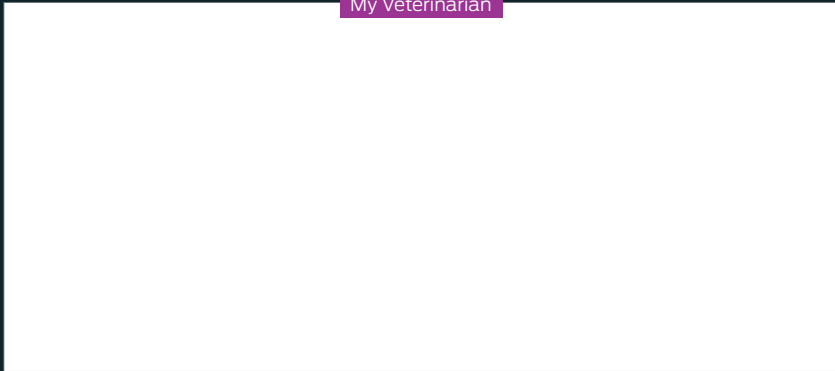
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