

# Feeding your Kitten

## What should I feed my kitten?

Diet is extremely important during the growing months of a kitten's life. We recommend a VETERINARY RECOMMENDED NAME-BRAND FOOD made by a national cat food company (not a generic or local brand) and a diet MADE FOR KITTENS. This should be fed until your kitten is about **one year old**. We recommend that you only buy food that has been certified by an independent organization as complete and balanced. In the United States, you should look for food that has been certified by AAFCO, an independent organization that oversees the entire pet food industry. It does not endorse any particular food, but it will certify that the food has met the minimum requirements for nutrition. In Canada, look for foods approved by the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA).

Feeding a dry or canned form of cat food is acceptable. Any of the formulations is acceptable as long as the label states that the food is intended for growth (or is a kitten food), and is “complete and balanced”. This means that the food is nutritionally complete and meets the needs of growth and development. Each of the types of food has advantages and disadvantages. Dry food is definitely the most inexpensive. It can be left in the cat's bowl without

drying however free feeding an unlimited quantity of dry food is not recommended. Due to the usual high calorie count, free fed dry food can lead to obesity so it is best to feed a fixed quantity.

Table foods are not recommended. It is important for our growing kittens to have a diet that is healthy and balanced for them so feeding things like milk or tuna/tuna juice is not recommended. Surprisingly, milk is not good for cats of any age. Felines are unable to metabolize the lactose in milk so it can be harmful to their digestive tract causing intestinal discomfort. Also, when cats consume a lot of tuna/tuna juice over time it can cause mineral build up in the bladder causing bladder stones and other issues down the road. However an occasional cat treat meant for kittens is always okay!



## **How often should I feed my kitten?**

There are several “right” ways to feed kittens. The most popular method is commonly called “meal feeding.” This means that the kitten is fed at specific times of the day. A measured amount of food should be offered four times per day for five to twelve week old kittens. What is not eaten within thirty minutes is taken up. If the food is eaten within three to four minutes, the quantity is probably not sufficient. Kittens fed in this manner generally begin to cut back on one of those meals by three to four months of age and perhaps another one later. If a certain feeding is ignored for several days, it should be discontinued. Another option of feeding is free choice feeding. Free choice feeding means that food is available at all times. This tends to lead to overeating and obesity.



# Kitten Behavior

## What type of behavior should I expect from a healthy kitten?

It is very important that you provide stimulating and enriching play for your kitten, especially during the first week in its new home. Stalking and pouncing are important play behaviors in kittens and are necessary for proper muscular development. Your kitten will be less likely to use family members for these activities if you provide adequate kitten-safe toys. The best toys are lightweight and movable. These include wads of paper, toy mice and plastic balls. Any toy that is small enough to be swallowed should be avoided. We can help you choose the safest toys for your pet if you ever have any concerns. Never allow your kitten to play with string or ribbon unsupervised, if ingested these can cause serious intestinal problems if swallowed.



It is a kitten's natural instinct to want to scratch, explore, and climb up to high places. Be sure to provide acceptable means for your kitten to achieve these behaviors. Providing tall scratching posts or cat trees is the best way to fulfill their needs as well as give them an appropriate place to scratch and climb instead of unwanted places like furniture. Providing a safe 'cozy' place is important as well so having a bed is beneficial.

## How do I discipline my kitten?

- Don't allow your kitten to do anything now that you will consider unacceptable when he/she is an adult. This is very important, do not allow your kitten to be jumping or scratching on furniture or jumping on counter tops if this is not a behavior you will allow when the kitten is full grown.
- Disciplining a young kitten may be necessary if its behavior threatens people or property, but harsh punishment should be avoided. Hand clapping and using shaker cans or horns can be intimidating enough to inhibit undesirable behavior. However, remote punishment is preferred. Remote punishment consists of using something that appears unconnected to the punisher to stop the problem behavior. Examples include using spray bottles, throwing objects in the direction of the kitten to startle (but not hit) it, and making loud noises. Remote punishment is preferred because the kitten associates punishment with the undesirable act/noise and not with you.

## **How do I socialize my new kitten?**

The socialization period for kittens is between two and twelve weeks of age. During that time, the kitten is very impressionable to social influences. If it has good experiences with men, women, children, dogs, other cats, and novel items such as vacuums, baths, car rides and strollers, it is likely to accept them throughout life. If the experiences are absent or unpleasant, your kitten may become apprehensive or adverse to them. During this time frame, we encourage you to expose your cat to



as many types of social situations and influences as possible in a slow and always positive manner. You should also play with all parts of your kitten. Handling their ears, bellies, toes and other body parts when they're in their socialization period will help allow you to be able to handle them as adults for ear cleanings, nail trims and other procedures.

## **How should I introduce my new kitten to my other cat?**

Most kittens receive a hostile reception from other household pets, especially another cat when entering a new home. The other cat usually sees no need for a kitten in the household and these feelings are reinforced if it perceives that special favoritism is being shown to the kitten. The existing cat must not feel that it is necessary to compete for food or attention. The new kitten should have its own food bowl and it should not be permitted to eat from the other cat's bowl. Sometimes it is even best at first to feed the cats away from one another (for example on opposite sides of the kitchen) to ensure that the existing cat doesn't feel threatened or feel the need to protect its food from the kitten.



Although it is natural to spend time holding and cuddling the kitten, the existing cat will quickly sense that it is being neglected. The new kitten needs lots of love and attention, but the existing cat should not be slighted. In fact, the transition will be smoother if the existing cat is given more attention than normal. The introduction period will usually last one to two weeks and can have varying outcomes such as hostility,

tolerance and bonding depending on if competition is minimized. It is not an issue if the introduction period is taking a bit longer than expected or if it is not going well. Try to keep things as slow/gradual

and positive as possible. There are pheromone products available at any pet store or online that may help this period of time go a bit smoother. These pheromones are natural scents that are specific to cats and convey a message of security, reassurance, and wellbeing. This helps the cat cope with environmental changes and other stressful situations. The pheromones come in the form of a collar, spray called Feliway and plug in diffusers.

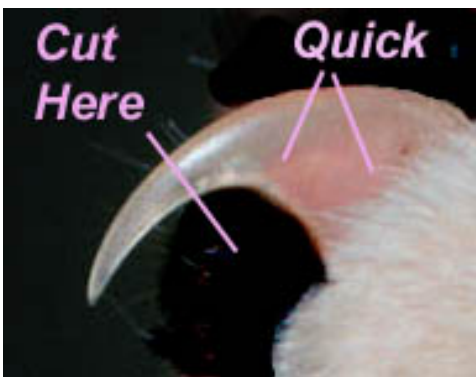
It is also very important to have an adequate amount of litter boxes for your new kitten and any other cats in the house. The common rule is one extra litter box per cat you have so if you have 2 cats then you should have a total of 3-4 litter boxes. This gives all the cats in the household an opportunity to have their own space to claim if they do not choose to share. Each litter box should have an unscented clay based clumping litter and can be uncovered or covered whatever is preferred, although uncovered is almost always favored .





## Can I trim my kitten's sharp toe nails?

Kittens have very sharp toe nails. They can be trimmed with your regular finger nail clippers or with nail trimmers made for cats and dogs. It's very important to start cutting your kittens nails when they are young to get them used to it. If you take too much off the nail, you will cut into the "quick" and bleeding and pain will occur. If this happens, neither you nor your cat will want to do this again. Therefore, a few points are helpful:



- Cats almost always have clear or white nails, you can see the pink of the quick through the nail very well. Avoid the pink area, and you should be out of the quick.
- When cutting nails, use sharp trimmers. Dull trimmers tend to crush the nail and cause pain even if you are not in the quick.
- You should always have styptic powder available. This is sold in pet stores under several trade names, but it will be labeled for use in trimming nails.
- If your kitten is squirmy or loses patience, just cut a few nails at a time. It's ok to just cut one paw once a week or one nail every day. You want this experience to be very calm and positive so that no fear is associated with trimming nails later in life.
- It is important for outdoor cats to have longer claws so they can use them as a defense mechanism if needed. As long as your cat stays indoors only it can be best to keep cats nails moderately short so that you will not experience any trouble in regards to furniture or being scratched. Nail caps (pictured below) are always available to keep nails covered so that they are not too sharp.



Colored nail caps

# Microchips

## Why should I do this?

Microchips are a safe and simple way to be sure your pet's identification is never mistaken. They are the most widely recommended pet identification device. Even if your pet generally wears a collar, your pet may run out the door before you have a chance to put it on, or the collar may break away when your pet is out of the house.

## How do they work?

This tiny device is implanted under the skin with a needle much like administering an injection. You then register the microchip with the company to give them all of your contact information. There is NO yearly fee you have to pay to the microchip companies. The information will always be there. A special scanner can detect these chips; veterinary hospitals and animal shelters across the country have these scanners. A national registry assists in the identification and return of micro chipped pets throughout the United States and Canada.

# Pet Insurance

There are a few different companies which offer pet insurance plans. This is something to be considered on a patient to patient basis. We have found that the company "Trupanion" covers more than some of the other insurance companies out there. Another option is to set up a "savings account" for your puppy and put a small amount of money into it every month. Then, you have a special account to pull money from in the case of an emergency.