

## Cat Care



**Scientific name:** *Felis Catus*

**Size:** The average house cat is eight to eleven pounds, but you can have a petite six-pound calico or a big 15-pound Maine Coon cat.

**Lifespan:** Indoor cats regularly live to be 15 years old, and some kitties live even longer.

**Colors/varieties:** There are many different breeds of cats—from the hairless Sphynx and the fluffy, puffy Persian to the silvery spotted Egyptian mau. But the most popular kitties of all are non-pedigree—that includes brown tabbies, black-and-orange tortoiseshells, all-black cats with long hair, striped kitties with white socks and every cat in between!

Cats were domesticated, or bred to be friendly to humans, sometime between 4,000 and 8,000 years ago, in Africa and the Middle East. Small wild cats started hanging out where humans stored their grain. Can you think of a better place to find mice?! When humans saw cats up close and personal, they began to admire felines for their beauty and grace.

**Here kitty, kitty!** Where can you get a pet? The best cats are available for adoption at your local shelter.

Kittens are a ton of fun, but they'll need supervision 24/7. Someone should be home all the time to watch, feed and play with them. Adult cats are friendly and cuddly, too, and don't need as much attention.

Your cat may not speak your language, but she does have a way of showing you how she's feeling. We call this **TAIL TALK!** If her tail is straight up, she's psyched that you're near. If it's twitching and if she hisses, leave her alone. Like everybody else, cats need time out.

**Show us your ID, please:** Make sure your cat wears a collar with an identification tag engraved with your address and phone number.

## Chow Time

Your cat is a carnivore, and needs a diet of mainly meat to stay healthy. Whether you feed your pet wet food or dry food or some of both, make sure it's good quality. And don't give your cat dog food—it won't meet her nutritional needs, and can make her sick.

It's a good rule of thumb (or should we say "rule of paw"?) to feed your cat twice a day. Throw out any leftover wet food that hasn't been eaten after half an hour.

**Snack time!** Treats are yummy for cats, but don't go overboard. Most packaged treats contain lots of sugar and fat, which can pack on the pounds. Some cats like fresh fruits and vegetables, like broccoli, corn or cantaloupe. You can offer these once in awhile.

**Fill 'er up!** Your cat should have fresh, clean water available at ALL times. Change her bowl at least once a day.

**Memorize this list of No-Nos for your cat:**

- Chocolate
- Bones
- Milk
- Avocado
- Coffee
- Raisins and grapes
- Moldy or spoiled food
- Salt
- Garlic
- Onions, onion powder

## Home, Sweet Home

**The safest place for your pet is your home!** Cats who go outdoors unsupervised can get hit by a car or catch diseases from wild animals or stray cats and dogs.

Felines may sleep up to 16 hours a day, so make sure that your cat has a cozy bed or box with a comfy blanket to curl up in.

**Mean greens!** Keep your kitty away from poisonous plants, including aloe, lilies, English ivy and rhododendron.

**Be a litter bug!** That means keep *bugging* yourself until you've cleaned the *litterbox*! Scoop out used litter and solid waste daily. Your cat is naturally clean and will be very careful to use her box only. If she has an accident outside the box, she may be sick.

## Fun and Games

**A twitch of tail**, a blur of fur, a bounce and a pounce and a bite.... The hunter stalks her prey, drops it to the floor and walks off. Looks like one of your sweat socks has just fallen victim to your lean, not-so-mean kitty machine! To keep your cat happy, she'll need lots of exercise and fun games. Try to spend 10 to 15 minutes, twice a day, playing with your cat. Cats love to hide, stalk and zoom through the room. Interactive cat toys and catnip mice are great—but avoid toys with small parts that your pet could accidentally eat.

**The best (and cheapest) cat toy of all time?** A cardboard box! An empty cardboard tube can be fascinating for felines, too—will something come out of that tunnel...or not?

Did you know that your cat has her own personal hairdresser—you! Brush her at least once a week. If she's got long hair, you'll need to brush her more often. She may enjoy the attention so much that this is one appointment she'll never want to miss! Your grooming session with your cat is a great time to check under her fur for lumps, bumps, scabs and flea dirt, which looks like tiny specks of black pepper.

**String isn't the thing for your cat!** String and yarn, if ingested, can wrap around your cat's intestines and make her sick.

Not all cats like to be picked up. Your kitty loves when you pet her, and may sit on your lap. She'll let you know when she wants petting time!

For the most part, cats are territorial and aren't always thrilled when other animals get too close to their turf. And P.S., it's so not true that cats and dogs hate each other. If introduced when they're young, some cat and dogs can be great pals!

**Doctor's orders:** Get your pet set at the veterinarian for a yearly checkup. Your vet can help you decide what vaccinations your pet needs. In some states, cats must be vaccinated against rabies. Check with your vet about local regulations.

Your cat should be spayed, if she's female, or neutered, if he's a male. After the operation, the animal can't have babies. This operation also prevents cats from getting certain diseases when they're older.

**Kitty's claws** keep growing all the time! If you clip your cat's nails regularly, you'll minimize any damage to furniture (and your hands) should she accidentally scratch. Your veterinarian can show you the proper way to trim a cat's nails, but it's always a good idea to have an adult supervise.