

# Caring for your **Cat or Kitten**

Taking care of a cat or kitten is a big job! Find out what supplies you will need and what responsibilities you will have to take care of your new best friend.

## **Supplies Needed**

- Balanced, brand name food. Not generic! Make sure it's for the right age. Dry food is better for your pet's teeth. Canned food is more similar to a natural diet for cats, so some of both is probably best.
- Food and water bowls. Ceramic and metal are best. Some pets are sensitive to plastic.
- Cat toys – make sure there aren't any small parts or string that can fall off and be swallowed
- A cat brush
- Cat toothpaste and toothbrush
- "Breakaway" collar and ID tag
- Microchip both indoor and outdoor cats
- Scratching post or scratching pad
- Litter box – one per cat, plus one extra
- Litter – scoopable litter is best. Don't use dusty or perfumed litter.
- Cat carrier
- Cat nail clippers
- Optional: Cat condo, cat leash and harness, cat bed, cat "plants"

## **Feeding Your Cat/Kitten**

- Kittens (under 6 months): 3-4 times a day
- Over 6 months : Feed twice a day (amount depends on food type and how active your cat is)
- Training your cat to eat twice a day: When your kitten turns 6 months old, offer food to him/her twice a day only. Leave the food out for ½ hour only. Your cat will quickly learn to eat all of his/her food during the half hour.
- Avoid giving your pet too many treats since cats can become overweight as they age

## **Dangers! Never Feed Your Cat/Kitten:**

- Alcoholic drinks
- Chocolate
- Coffee
- Grapes and raisins
- Moldy or spoiled food
- Onions, garlic and chives
- Bones
- Tomato plants
- Unripe fruit
- Yeast dough
- Any houseplants – some are poisonous



## Chores

### Daily

- Clean litter box, feed (see above)
- Clean water/food bowls
- Change water
- Play with your cat
- Walk (optional)

### Weekly

- Thoroughly clean the litter box using a mild soap and replace litter
- Brush teeth once

### Two Times a Week

- Brush hair (gently)

### Monthly

- Check to see if nails need to be trimmed

### Yearly

- Have your parent or guardian take your cat to veterinarian for a check-up

## Training

You can train your cat to walk on leash by using a leash or harness made for cats, by starting in a fenced-in yard and rewarding them for good behavior with treats. You can also train your cat to use a scratching post by placing catnip around the base of the post and rewarding your pet when he/she uses the scratching post. Cats love to scratch!

## Brushing Your Cat's Teeth

It is not easy, but cats are healthier if you brush their teeth. Use cat toothpaste and brush. Start when they are kittens, so they get used to it.

## Spaying and Neutering

- Female cats should be spayed and male cats neutered by six months old. This reduces bad behavior and some diseases later in life.

## Finding the Right Veterinarian

- When you get your pet, have your parent or guardian take it to a veterinarian for a check-up
- Your pet should see a veterinarian at least once a year and when you think it might be sick

*Information on taking caring of your cat or kitten provided by Link Welborn, DVM DABVP, of Temple Terrace Animal & Bird Hospital in Tampa, Florida.*



# "Should my pet be eating that?"

## Foods Your Pets Should Avoid

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
|   | <b>Chocolate/<br/>Coffee</b>               | Can cause vomiting, diarrhea, hyperactivity, high heart rate, tremors, seizures and even death. |
|   | <b>Alcohol</b>                             | Can cause vomiting, drunkenness, coma and death.  |
|   | <b>Avocado</b>                             | Can be fatal to birds and rabbits. Can cause vomiting and diarrhea in dogs.                     |
|   | <b>Macadamia<br/>Nuts</b>                  | Can cause temporary hind leg weakness, paralysis and tremors in dogs.                           |
|   | <b>Grapes/<br/>Raisins</b>                 | Can cause kidney failure.   |
|   | <b>Raw Yeast<br/>Bread Dough</b>           | Can cause bloat and drunkenness.  |
|   | <b>Products<br/>Containing<br/>Xylitol</b> | Can cause seizures and liver failure.   |
|  | <b>Onions/Garlic</b>                       | Can cause vomiting and red blood cell damage.   |

**"What should I do if I think my pet has eaten something poisonous?"**

Stay calm and contact your veterinarian for advice:

OR Call the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center.

**ASPCA** ANIMAL POISON  
CONTROL CENTER

**888-426-4435. Where knowledge is your lifeline.™**

[www.aspca.org/apcc](http://www.aspca.org/apcc)



# Disaster Planning for Cat Owners

## Ready Your Cat

- Make sure your cat is wearing ID tags with your most up-to-date contact information.
- Microchip your cat as a more permanent form of identification—in case collars or tags come off.
- Train your cat to feel comfortable going into a crate with regular in-crate sessions with treats.
- Always bring pets indoors at the first sign or warning of a storm or disaster. Pets can become disoriented and wander away from home in a crisis.

## Prepare Your Home

- Ideally, you should evacuate with your pet, but if you are unable to do so, a [rescue alert sticker](#) placed near your front door will let first responders know that you have a cat inside your home.
- If sheltering in place, consider these things when choosing your safe room:
  - » Be aware of hazards such as windows, flying debris, etc.
  - » Utility rooms, bathrooms and unfinished basements may be easier to clean if your pet has an accident.
  - » Having a supply of fresh water is particularly important. In areas that may lose electricity, fill up bathtubs and sinks ahead of time to ensure that you have access to water during a power outage or other crises.
  - » In the event of flooding, go to the highest location in your home, or a room that has access to counters or high shelves where your animals can take shelter.

## Locate a Temporary Caregiver

*(if your cat cannot stay with you after you evacuate)*

- Contact your veterinarian for a list of preferred boarding kennels and facilities.
- Ask your local animal shelter if they provide emergency shelter or foster care for pets.
- Identify hotels or motels outside of your immediate area that accept pets.
- Ask friends and relatives outside your immediate area if they would be willing to take in your pet.



## Create an Emergency Kit

- Obtain a crate that comfortably fits your cat, write your cat's name and your contact information on a piece of duct tape and stick it on the outside of the crate in case you become separated from your cat.
- Make a portable emergency kit that includes the following:
  - » Medical records
  - » Water (7 days' worth of bottled)
  - » Water bowls
  - » Pet food (3-7 days' worth of canned food with pop tops or dry food)
  - » Pet's medications
  - » Disposable litter trays (*aluminum roasting pans work well*)
  - » Litter or paper toweling
  - » Litter scooper
  - » [Pet first aid kit](#)
  - » Dish soap and disinfectant
  - » Disposable garbage bags for clean-up
  - » Extra collar
  - » Flashlight
  - » Blanket
  - » Pillow case (*as an alternative to a cat carrier*)
  - » Recent photos of your cat (*hard copy in case your phone dies*)
  - » Toys

Consider putting the kit inside the crate and storing near an exit.



# DIY Pet First-Aid Kit

Use this kit in an emergency until your veterinarian can take over

## Here's What You'll Need:

- 1) Phone number, clinic name, address of your veterinarian PLUS contact info for local veterinary emergency clinics
- 2) Absorbent gauze pads
- 3) Adhesive tape
- 4) Cotton balls or swabs
- 5) Fresh 3% hydrogen peroxide to induce vomiting  
(always check with veterinarian or animal poison control expert before giving to your pet)
- 6) Ice pack
- 7) Disposable gloves
- 8) Scissors with blunt end PLUS tweezers
- 9) Over-the-counter antibiotic ointment
- 10) Liquid dishwashing detergent for bathing PLUS towels
- 11) Small flashlight
- 12) Oral syringe or kitchen baster
- 13) Alcohol wipes
- 14) Styptic powder
- 15) Saline eye solution PLUS artificial tear gel

For more information and a how-to video, go to  
[aspca.org/resource/saving-lives/how-make-pet-first-aid-kit](https://aspca.org/resource/saving-lives/how-make-pet-first-aid-kit)

[ASPCapro.org](https://aspca.org)  
[ASPCapro.org/poison](https://aspca.org/poison)



## BODY CONDITION SYSTEM™ CHART

### WHERE DO YOU THINK YOUR PET SCORES?

#### Benefits of maintaining ideal body condition:

- ➔ Reduces potential for developing weight-related problems.
- ➔ Reduces percentage of body fat for better health.

If you have any questions, please call toll-free, 1-866-884-VETS (8387) weekdays, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. EST.

#### CANINE BODY CONDITION SYSTEM™ CHART

- TOO THIN**
- 1** Ribs, lumbar vertebrae, pelvic bones and all bony prominences evident from a distance. No visible body fat. Obvious loss of muscle mass.
  - 2** Ribs, lumbar vertebrae and pelvic bones easily visible. No fat easily felt. Some evidence of other bony prominence. Minimal loss of muscle mass.
  - 3** Ribs easily felt and may be visible with no covering fat. Tops of lumbar vertebrae visible. Pelvic bones becoming prominent. Obvious waist and abdominal tuck.

- IDEAL**
- 4** Ribs easily felt, with minimal fat covering. Waist easily noted, viewed from above. Abdominal tuck evident.
  - 5** Ribs can be felt without excess fat covering. Waist observed behind ribs when viewed from above. Abdomen tucked up when viewed from side.

- TOO HEAVY**
- 6** Ribs can be felt with slight excess fat covering. Waist is discernible viewed from above but is not prominent. Abdominal tuck apparent.
  - 7** Ribs felt with difficulty; heavy fat cover. Noticeable fat deposits over lumbar area and base of tail. Waist absent or barely visible. Abdominal tuck may be present.
  - 8** Ribs not able to be felt under very heavy fat cover, or felt only with significant pressure. Heavy fat deposits over lumbar area and base of tail. Waist absent. No abdominal tuck. Obvious abdominal distention may be present.
  - 9** Massive fat deposits over thorax, spine and base of tail. Waist and abdominal tuck absent. Fat deposits on neck and limbs. Obvious abdominal distention.



#### FELINE BODY CONDITION SYSTEM™ CHART

- TOO THIN**
- 1** Ribs visible on shorthaired cats; no fat easily felt; severe abdominal tuck; lumbar vertebrae and wings of ilia easily felt.
  - 2** Ribs easily visible on shorthaired cats; lumbar vertebrae obvious with minimal muscle mass; pronounced abdominal tuck; no fat easily felt.
  - 3** Ribs easily felt with minimal fat covering; lumbar vertebrae obvious; obvious waist behind ribs; minimal abdominal fat.
  - 4** Ribs felt with minimal fat covering; noticeable waist behind ribs; slight abdominal tuck; abdominal fat pad absent.

- IDEAL**
- 5** Well-proportioned; observe waist behind ribs; ribs can be felt with slight fat covering; abdominal fat pad minimal.

- TOO HEAVY**
- 6** Ribs can be felt with slight excess fat covering; waist and abdominal fat pad distinguishable but not obvious; abdominal tuck absent.
  - 7** Ribs not easily felt with moderate fat covering; waist poorly discernible; obvious rounding of abdomen; moderate abdominal fat pad.
  - 8** Ribs cannot be felt due to excess fat covering; waist absent; obvious rounding of abdomen with prominent abdominal fat pad; fat deposits present over lumbar area.
  - 9** Ribs not felt under heavy fat cover; heavy fat deposits over lumbar area, face and limbs; distention of abdomen with no waist; extensive abdominal fat deposits.



The BODY CONDITION SYSTEM was developed at the Nestlé Purina PetCare Center and has been published in the following journals:

Mawby D, Bartges JW, Moyers T, et. al. Comparison of body fat estimates by dual-energy x-ray absorptiometry and deuterium oxide dilution in client owned dogs. Compendium 2001; 23 (9A): 70

Laflamme DP. Development and Validation of a Body Condition Score System for Dogs. Canine Practice July/August 1997; 22:10-15

Kealy, et. al. Effects of Diet Restriction on Life Span and Age-Related Changes in Dogs. JAVMA 2002; 220:1315-1320

# Cat: Keeping Cats Safe from Poisons



Cats are naturally curious, but their curiosity can put them in danger, such as when they become tempted to taste plants or other household items that may be poisonous to them. Here are some recommendations to keep your kitties safe and prevent your greenery from getting chewed!

## To Prevent Plant Eating

- Remove plants from areas the cat has access to.
- Provide your cat with a kitty herb garden to chew on—there are a number available in pet stores. Try oat grass, catnip, or alfalfa. Wheat grass is also safe for cats.
- Praise your kitty or give her treats when she chews on her kitty grass.
- Teach your cat not to chew on household plants by using an aversive spray. We recommend Bitter Apple, as it is safe for plants and animals (although it does not taste good to animals). Spray the product on all of the plant leaves. This way, if the cat tries to chew on the plant, it will have an unpleasant taste that it will associate with plant-eating. Hot chili sauce can be brushed on plant leaves for a similar effect.

## Other Household Hazards

- Secure all cupboards, medicine chests, and closets to keep them off limits to kitties. Use child-proof latches when possible.
- Use natural, non-toxic cleaners when possible. Since cats are fastidious groomers, anything that makes contact with their skin may be ingested while they clean themselves.
- Cationic and anionic detergents (such as ammonia-based cleaners) and phenol disinfectants (such as PineSol) are especially dangerous to cats.
- Use safety or snap traps for pests instead of insecticides and rodenticides. Remember that your cat may ingest a poisoned mouse or bug and can then be poisoned himself.
- Never give your pet any medications that have not been prescribed by your veterinarian.
- Keep your cat indoors to reduce exposure to herbicides, anti-freeze, gasoline and other poisonous substances that they may ingest, either intentionally or by grooming themselves.
- Remember that some herbs and essential oils are poisonous to animals if ingested or applied topically. Always consult with your vet.
- Do not feed table scraps to your cat. Many human foods, such as chocolate and onions can be fatal to cats. Other foods can cause stomach distress.

Plants and poisons produce a variety of symptoms, but the following are cause for concern: Listlessness, muscle weakness, vomiting (especially if the vomit contains leaves or vegetable matter), abdominal pain, difficulty breathing, tremors, diarrhea, or convulsion.

## Steps to Follow if You Suspect Your Pet Has Been Poisoned

1. Quickly determine the amount and type of plant or poison the animal has eaten.
2. Call your veterinarian immediately. If he or she is not available, contact the closest emergency veterinary clinic.
3. Carefully follow your veterinarian's instructions for immediate care.
4. Immediately take your pet, samples of any vomit or stool passed, and a large sample of the suspected plant to your veterinarian.

## Cat: Keeping Cats Safe from Poisons *(continued)*

This list has been gathered from a variety of sources, but is far from complete. If your pet shows symptoms of poisoning, treat it as an emergency and get veterinary attention immediately.

### Poisonous Plants

|                  |                  |                     |                 |
|------------------|------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Amaryllis        | Deadly           | Lantana             | Red Sage        |
| Angels Trumpet   | Nightshade       | Larkspur            | Rhododendron    |
| Azalea           | Delphinium       | Laurel (English)    | Rhubarb         |
| Baneberry        | Dieffenbachia    | Ligustrum (privet)  | Rosary Bean     |
| Bittersweet      | Dumb Cane        | Lilly of the Valley | Squill          |
| Black Locust     | Elderberry       | Marigold            | String of Beads |
| Blue Cohosh      | Euonymus         | Marijuana           | Sweet Pea       |
| Boxwood          | Foxglove         | Mistletoe           | Tallow Tree     |
| Buttercup        | Golden Chain     | Monkshood           | Toadstools      |
| Caladium         | Hemlock          | Morning Glory       | Tobacco         |
| Carnation        | Holly            | Mountain Laurel     | Tomato Leaves   |
| Carolina Jasmine | Horse Chestnut   | Narcissus           | Toyon Leaves    |
| Castor Bean      | Hyacinth         | Oleander            | Umbrella Plant  |
| Chinaberry Tree  | Hydrangea        | Periwinkle          | Vinca           |
| Chokecherry      | Iris             | Philodendron        | Walnut (green)  |
| Chrysanthemum    | Ivy              | Poinsettia          | Wisteria        |
| Cotoneaster      | Jequirity Bean   | Poison Ivy          | Witch Hazel     |
| Creeping Charlie | Jerusalem Cherry | Poison Oak          | Woodrose        |
| Crocus           | Jimson Weed      | Poison Sumac        | Yaupon Tree     |
| Daffodil         | Jonquil          | Pokeberry           | Yew             |

### Other Poisons

#### Animals

Bees  
Bufa toads  
Certain lizards and snakes  
Fire ants  
Rattlesnakes  
Spiders  
Wasps

#### Household

#### Substances

Ammonia products  
Animal and plant poisons  
Antifreeze

Antiperspirants  
Bar soap  
Bath oils  
Brake fluid  
Carburetor cleaners  
Caulking compounds  
Coal and wood tar derivatives  
Detergents  
Deodorants  
Engine cleaners/frost removers  
Eye makeup  
Fabric softeners  
Gasoline  
Hair products  
Lacquer thinners

Laxatives  
Liniments  
Lubricants  
Moth Balls  
Nail cosmetics  
Oil paints  
Ointments  
Paint and varnish  
Perfumes  
Phenol disinfectants  
Photographic chemicals  
Pine oil disinfectants  
Radiator cleaners  
Shaving lotions  
Suntan lotions  
Tire repair products

Turpentine  
Windshield washer fluid  
Wood preservatives

#### Medicines

Acetaminophen  
Athlete's foot remedies  
Aspirin  
Corn removers  
Citrus oils and pennyroyal  
Diet pills  
Iodoform  
Medicated products for dogs  
Sleeping pills



# Cats: Common Health Problems

Be on the lookout for these common health problems in your cat:

**Fleas.** Fleas can easily invade your home, particularly if you have a dog or if you let your cat outside. Fleas can cause such health problems in cats as anemia, allergies, skin infections and tapeworms.

There is a vast array of flea-fighting products that are highly effective and safe; consult your veterinarian for advice on products to use and an ongoing flea control plan. Avoid using pesticides and over-the-counter flea remedies—they are unnecessary given today's arsenal of safer, veterinarian-prescribed products—and never use flea products on your cat that are intended for use on dogs because such products can be fatal to your cat. Flea collars are not effective against fleas and can even irritate your cat's skin.

**Tapeworms.** These internal parasites are picked up by ingesting rodents or raw meat or fish, or from adult fleas that are carriers. Tapeworms are passed through the cat's feces. Often you can spot tapeworm segments in your cat's stool or under her tail—they look like small grains of rice. If you see signs of tapeworms, bring a fecal sample to your veterinarian to get worming medication for your cat. You may need to start a flea control program at the same time. Never use over-the-counter worming products. These are usually ineffective and can cause unwanted side effects in your cat.

**Coccidia.** These internal parasites are picked up from the infected feces of other animals. Symptoms can be nonexistent or quite serious; they include mild to severe diarrhea, weakness, depression, loss of appetite and weight loss. Your veterinarian will need a fresh fecal sample to diagnose the problem and prescribe medication for these parasites.

**Roundworms, hookworms, and whipworms.** These internal parasites cause symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhea, a pot belly and a dull coat. The symptoms become more serious and debilitating if your cat's condition is left untreated. Your veterinarian can diagnose these parasites by examining a fecal sample under a microscope. The various treatments may involve several doses before these parasites are eliminated.

**Ear mites.** If you spot a dark, waxy buildup in your cat's ears, he may have ear mites, which are microscopic parasites. These crab-like creatures itch like crazy, and in a futile attempt to scratch that itch, cats will shake their heads or paw at their ears, sometimes scratching them raw. Left untreated, ear mites can

cause deafness. Prescription ear treatments are available to eliminate ear mites. Let your veterinarian know if you have more than one pet,

because the ear mites will simply move to the next untreated animal.

**Toxoplasma gondii.** This small parasite may be of concern to humans as well as cats, especially people with compromised immune systems. Toxoplasmosis has traditionally been a reason for pregnant women to think they must give up their pet, but this is not necessary. Safe handling of food and water and precautions when cleaning the litter box can easily prevent the transmission of this parasite; that's why it's best to assign someone else the responsibility for cleaning the litter box. The majority of toxoplasmosis infections in humans have been the result of ingesting raw or undercooked meat. Cats become infested with this parasite through eating raw prey, but only pass contagious feces for approximately two weeks (and the feces themselves are only infective after 24 hours have passed). To prevent infection, keep your cat safely confined and feed him commercial cat food.

**Urinary problems.** With all cats, and especially males, be alert for any signs of painful urination, straining to urinate or blood in the urine. These symptoms can indicate a condition that is very serious. If a cat becomes "blocked" (unable to urinate), he could die within hours. If any of these signs appear, immediate veterinary attention is necessary. As a preventive measure, talk to your veterinarian about your cat's diet and other factors that relate to urinary problems.

## Preventing Common Feline Diseases

Many diseases common to cats can be prevented in two ways: by keeping your cat indoors, and by having your cat vaccinated according to your veterinarian's advice.

Common feline illnesses include the following:

**Upper respiratory infections (URIs).** URIs are similar in many ways to the common cold in humans and produce many of the same symptoms: sneezing, runny nose and eyes, reddened eyes, fever, and decreased appetite. However, URIs can be much more serious than common colds—they can be fatal if left untreated. These airborne viruses are highly contagious; they can be transmitted to cats through human handling and through contact with other cats and with inanimate objects such as litter boxes, food bowls, and grooming tools. Separate any new cat from your other cats for at least three weeks until you are sure your newcomer doesn't have any symptoms of a URI.

Prevention is the best approach to URIs—have your cat vaccinated. But if your cat does come down with cold-like symptoms, contact your veterinarian right away. The veterinarian will probably



prescribe antibiotics to prevent secondary infections and give you precise care instructions. Follow them carefully and make sure your cat eats and drinks sufficiently.

**Rabies.** All cats, even indoor cats, should be vaccinated against rabies, which is now seen more commonly in cats than in any other domestic animal. Rabies is a viral illness that is transmitted through bite wounds from infected animals and attacks the nervous system. If your cat bites anyone, you may need to show proof of rabies vaccination.

Rabies is a fatal illness. Prevent rabies through vaccination and by keeping your cat inside.

**Feline panleukopenia.** Commonly known as feline distemper, this is a highly contagious viral disease that can be transmitted through contact with humans, infected cats, clothing, hair, paws, food bowls, and even cat carriers. The disease comes on suddenly with vomiting, loss of appetite, and diarrhea. Vaccinate against this virus.

**Feline leukemia virus (FeLV).** FeLV is a fatal infectious virus that affects the immune system and can cause several forms of cancer and other associated diseases. It is transmitted through the saliva, urine, and feces of infected cats. There is no link between feline leukemia and human forms of leukemia.

There are blood tests to determine if your cat may be carrying the virus. Your cat should be tested before being vaccinated. Since there is no cure, it is best to keep your cat indoors (and away from contact with other cats). Discuss vaccination schedules with your veterinarian.

**Feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV).** FIV is similar to human acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), but it is not the same virus and cannot be passed to humans.

This fatal virus attacks the immune system, causing a variety of symptoms. General signs can include chronic, nonresponding infections; respiratory problems; appetite loss; persistent diarrhea; and severe oral infections. FIV is passed from cat to cat primarily through bites.

A vaccine is available to help protect cats from contracting FIV, but an FIV blood test should always be performed before vaccination. The best protection against FIV is keeping your cat happy indoors.

**Feline infectious peritonitis (FIP).** FIP is another virus that is almost always fatal to cats. This virus can take two forms, commonly referred to as wet (which involves fluid in the abdomen) and dry (which does not). Both forms of FIP may cause fever, lethargy, vomiting, diarrhea, and loss of appetite.

A blood test is available to determine if your cat has been exposed to this family of viruses. You can learn more about this test by talking to your regular veterinarian. There is no effective treatment for FIP, but there is hope for prevention in the form of recently developed vaccines. The best prevention is to keep your cat indoors, up-to-date on vaccines, and away from strange animals.

### Detecting Illness in Your Cat

Cats can't tell us where or when it hurts. In fact, many animals will try to mask pain or illness. That's why it is extremely important that you get to know your cat's regular habits and behaviors. Any deviation from his or her normal behavior could indicate a problem with his or her health. Some symptoms and behaviors are obvious: diarrhea, vomiting, coughing, sneezing, runny nose or eyes, and trouble using the litter box. There are other, more subtle, physical and behavioral signs that might indicate a trip to the vet is in order. Take note if your cat does any of the following:

- Misses more than one meal
- Shows a sudden change in eating habits
- Stops using the litter box
- Develops puffiness or a lump under the skin
- Hides for more than a day
- Becomes suddenly short-tempered or intolerant of attention
- Shakes his head frequently
- Changes his routine or loses interest in his favorite games
- Stops grooming



## Mobile SPCA

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*Adapted from material originally developed by applied animal behaviorists at the Dumb Friends League, Denver, Colorado.*

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Maddie's Fund,® The Pet Rescue Foundation, ([www.maddiesfund.org](http://www.maddiesfund.org)) is a family foundation funded by PeopleSoft and Workday Founder Dave Duffield, and his wife, Cheryl, to help create a no-kill nation. The first step is to help develop programs that guarantee loving homes for all healthy shelter dogs and cats throughout the country. The next step is to save the sick, injured and poorly behaved pets in animal shelters nationwide. Maddie's Fund is named after the family's beloved Miniature Schnauzer who passed away in 1997.

# Choosing the Correct Kitty Litter

## What to choose when cat litter is on your shopping list

Your new cat is coming home from the animal shelter tomorrow. Busily you shop, checking off the items on your list, including cat food, toys, a scratching post and myriad other goodies.

And at the very top of the list are litterbox necessities. You head to the nearest pet supply superstore, and are faced with row after row of "all things litter." Pastel-colored clumping litter, good old clay litter, some that's made from pine and some that's made from newspaper...What to choose, what to choose? Whether you are an experienced owner or a novice, the multitude of choices could prove daunting. But this was not always the case.

## PAY DIRT

Prior to World War II, most cats lived indoor/outdoor lives and their toiletting areas were neighborhood backyards and gardens. For indoor needs, some families kept boxes of sand or ashes from the furnace for their cat's use in the cellar. Housewives of the 1940s were none too enamored with cats tracking ashes or sand through their homes. So an ex-sailor named Ed Lowe suggested that his neighbor try absorbent clay, which was a popular product for cleaning up industrial spills in wartime factories and happened to be made by his father's firm. Kitty Litter was born.

Granulated clay litter offered improved odor control over ashes or sand by siphoning urine to the bottom of the pan and controlling ammonia smells until the litter reached a saturation point—usually within a week in a box used by a single cat. Today, most folks either scoop solids daily and completely replace the litter once a week, or use less litter in the box and dump and clean daily. The granules of traditional litter are fairly large and do not tend to cling to a cat's paws, so there is little tracking of litter outside the box.

## TO CLUMP OR NOT TO CLUMP

Granulated clay litters remained unchallenged for nearly 40 years, with little change or refinement until Thomas Nelson, Ph.D., needed a way to supplement his income while in graduate school. The biochemist began to raise Persian cats, and ended up developing clumping litter. Quoted in an October 1996 article in *Cat Fancy* magazine, Dr. Nelson explains, "I hunted around and found clays that were dried but not baked. They were very absorbent and would form a clump when the cat urinated on them. The clump could then be removed, thereby getting rid of the urine. I had a box of litter I did not change in 10 years—I just added more—and it had absolutely no odor at all."

The removal of almost all urine and feces does produce a better-smelling box area for weeks at a time without completely throwing out the old litter and starting from scratch. But we should point out that if more than one cat uses the box, there is usually a fairly pronounced odor in

4 to 6 weeks, even with scooping and litter replacement. It is necessary to replace the approximate amount scooped out with fresh clumping litter, for if it is allowed to go below a certain volume, urine will tend to pool

and cake in corners and odors will arise.

The variety of clumping litters offers several options beyond the traditional scented and non-scented choices found with most granulated litters. Most cats prefer non-scented litter, an especially important point for owners who plan to use covered litter boxes. There are multi-cat formulas that form more cement-like clumps that will keep their form even when tread on by extra cat traffic; these are definitely not flushable! There are also less-tracking formulas, which offer slightly larger granules that are more likely to fall off of the cat's paws before he leaves the box. And there are clumping litters developed especially for flushability, a quality most clumping litters don't have due to their expansive properties. Each year the list of varieties grows.

A few years after clumping litter first came out, an article in the now-defunct holistic cat magazine *Tiger Tribe* questioned the safety of clumping litter if ingested, especially for neonate kittens who often eat litter when it is introduced to them during the weaning stage. While there has been no proof to claims of problems in scientific literature, caretakers may wish to delay introducing kittens to clumping litter until 3 to 4 months of age. Any cat older than that detected eating litter should be taken to a veterinarian, since this behavior often indicates anemia or other dietary deficiencies.

Scoopable cat litter continues to be a hot topic on the Internet, with some claiming that it is toxic and causes respiratory illness in cats. Many scoopable cat litters contain bentonite clay, a naturally occurring clay mineral that is considered to be biologically inert when ingested, and/or silica. Silica is also a physically and chemically inert substance, and is a major component found in ordinary sand. Silica is also used as a moisture-absorbing agent in the little packets found in shoe boxes, medications and some foods. According to our experts at the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center, pets ingesting small amounts of silica gel may develop only mild gastrointestinal upset, if any signs develop at all.

Cats may ingest small amounts of litter when grooming themselves after using the litter box, and these amounts pass through the digestive tract easily without problems. However, if an animal consumes a very large amount of litter (as can happen when a dog "cleans out" the litter box), gastrointestinal upset, constipation or, in rare cases, intestinal obstruction could potentially occur.

## OTHER LITTER

The field of cat litter doesn't end at granulated vs. clumping clay. The shelves at local pet supply emporia also hold an array of litters made from eco-friendly materials, including recycled newspaper, corn cobs, peanut shell meal, processed orange peel, wheat, pine sawdust and shavings, and hardwood and cedar chips. All promise to be superior odor controllers, long lasting and earth-friendly. What to choose, what to choose...?



In 1990, Dr. Peter Borchelt, an applied animal behaviorist, ran three 10-day tests to determine feline litter preference using a comparison of 14 types of commercial litter as well as topsoil mixed with clay litter and playbox sand. Each cat had 6 boxes to choose from; midway through the testing, the boxes were moved to prevent placement preference from overriding litter type preference. In test after test, fine-grained clumping litter was used more than twice as often as its nearest competitor, with boxes of wood chips, grain litter and recycled paper litter going completely unused. Borchelt concludes, "These data support the clinical observation that an important factor in cats' preference for litter material is its texture, granularity or coarseness. Everclean, a finely textured clay, was preferred to clay with larger particle sizes. But playbox sand, which is also finely textured, was not preferred much more than coarse clay, perhaps because of the weight of the particles."

What to choose? You control the purse strings, but the ultimate choice is up to your feline friend. For if he does not like the smell and feel of the litter, he will take his business elsewhere.

If you need further assistance go to [www.petsforlife.org](http://www.petsforlife.org),  
[www.mobilespca.org](http://www.mobilespca.org) or email the Mobile SPCA  
at [spca@mobilespca.org](mailto:spca@mobilespca.org)



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*Adapted from material originally developed by applied animal behaviorists at the Dumb Friends League, Denver, Colorado.*

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This material is brought to you by the Maddie's Fund,<sup>®</sup> the Maddie's Pet Rescue Project in Mobile.

Maddie's Fund,<sup>®</sup> The Pet Rescue Foundation, ([www.maddiesfund.org](http://www.maddiesfund.org)) is a family foundation funded by PeopleSoft and Workday Founder Dave Duffield, and his wife, Cheryl, to help create a no-kill nation. The first step is to help develop programs that guarantee loving homes for all healthy shelter dogs and cats throughout the country. The next step is to save the sick, injured and poorly behaved pets in animal shelters nationwide. Maddie's Fund is named after the family's beloved Miniature Schnauzer who passed away in 1997.



# FEAR FREE KITTEN SOCIALIZATION

## Making Exposure Positive

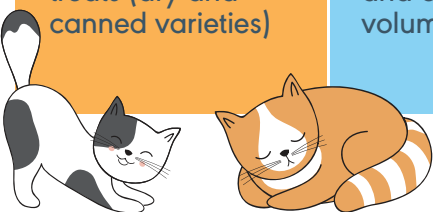
Use these bingo squares for ideas on how to socialize your kitten. Socialization and exposure are active processes that are most crucial from two to seven weeks of age but should be practiced well beyond this age range. However, it's important to realize that socialization is not simply about exposure—it's about making it fun and positive from the start.

Think of these experiences as a behavioral investment, like placing pennies in a piggy bank. When done properly, your investment will result in a friendly and outgoing cat. Positive, proactive socialization involves liberal use of food treats (or, for some kittens, interactive play with a toy/attention/petting) to help form positive associations.

# BINGO!



|   |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| Fun Visit at Veterinary Hospital (and grooming salon)                                 | Have visitors to your home   | Take your kitten to a friend's or relative's house for a kitten party            | Strive for your kitten to meet at least one new person a day during the first 14 weeks | See someone carrying something in hand, such as an umbrella            |
| Explore a minimum of 5 food puzzle toys   | Teach your kitten how to play with you   | See children playing from a distance   | Pair brushing with getting treats  | Introduce your kitten to a variety of sounds in a controlled manner    |
| Allow your kitten to experience a minimum of 5 novel non-toxic and non-noxious scents | Discover your kitten's preference for a scratching post and reward her with a treat or a play for using it | Go for a ride in a car within a secured carrier                                  | Acclimate your kitten to wearing a cat harness and leash                               | Acclimate your kitten to having a towel placed over her                |
| See or meet an adult dog who is healthy, friendly, and relaxed around cats            | Walk on 3 different safe and sturdy surfaces such as wood, gravel, sand, metal, concrete, rubber, etc      | See and/or meet a person with mobility assistance (wheelchair, walker, crutches) | Acclimate your kitten to a multilevel cat cage   | Allow your kitten to explore at least 5 novel objects at her own pace  |
| Taste at least 5 different types of kitten food and treats (dry and canned varieties) | Be exposed to a recording of fireworks at a low and controlled volume                                      | Teach your kitten to love her travel carrier                                     | Teach your kitten to enjoy taking medication (see Pill Your Pet with Kindness handout) | Touch your kitten on various body parts and give her a treat each time |



For more information, please visit [www.fearfreehappyhomes.com](http://www.fearfreehappyhomes.com)



# Managing Your Kitten's Rough Play

Play-motivated aggressive behaviors are common in young, active cats less than two years of age, and in cats that live in one-cat households. When cats play they incorporate a variety of behaviors into their play, such as exploratory, investigative and predatory behaviors. Play provides young cats with opportunities to practice skills they would normally need for survival. Kittens like to explore new areas and investigate anything that moves, and may bat at, pounce on and bite objects that resemble prey.

Kittens learn how to inhibit their bite from their littermates and their mother. A kitten that is separated from her family too early may play more roughly than a kitten that has had more valuable family time. In addition, if humans play with a young kitten using their hands and/or feet instead of toys, the kitten is liable to learn that rough play with people is okay. In most cases, it's possible to teach your kitten or young adult cat that rough play isn't acceptable behavior.

## Encourage Acceptable Behavior

Redirect your kitten's aggressive behavior onto acceptable objects like toys (see our handout: "Cat Toys and How To Use Them"). Drag a toy along the floor to encourage your kitten to pounce on it, or throw a toy away from your kitten to give her even more exercise chasing the toy down. Some kittens will even bring the toy back to be thrown again! Another good toy is one that your kitten can wrestle with, like a soft stuffed toy that's about the size of your kitten, so she can grab it with both front feet, bite it, and kick it with her back feet. This is one of the ways kittens play with each other, especially when they're young. It's also one of the ways they try to play with human feet and hands, so it's important to provide this type of alternative play target. Encourage play with a "wrestling toy" by rubbing it against your kitten's belly when she wants to play roughly - be sure to get your hand out of the way as soon as she accepts the toy.

Since kittens need a lot of playtime, try to set up three or four consistent times during the day to initiate play with your kitten. This will help her understand that she doesn't have to be the one to initiate play by pouncing on you.

## Discourage Unacceptable Behavior

You need to set the rules for your kitten's behavior, and every person your cat comes in contact with should reinforce these rules. Your kitten can't be expected to learn that it's okay to play rough with Dad, but not with the baby.

- Use aversives to discourage your kitten from nipping. You can either use a squirt bottle filled with water and a small amount of vinegar or a can of pressurized air to squirt your kitten with when she becomes too rough. To use this technique effectively, you'll always need to have the spray bottle or can handy. You can either place one in each room, or carry one with you as you move around the house. In some cases, you may want to apply taste aversives to your hands. If you have sensitive skin you may want to wear gloves and put the aversive on the gloves. The possible disadvantage to this method is that your kitten may learn that "hands with gloves taste bad and those without gloves don't." For more information on aversives, see our handout: "Aversives for Cats." Remember that aversives will work only if you offer your kitten acceptable alternatives.
- Redirect the behavior after using the aversive. After you startle your kitten with the aversive, IMMEDIATELY offer her a toy to wrestle with or to chase. This will encourage her to direct her rough play onto a toy instead of a person. We recommend that you keep a stash of toys hidden in each room specifically for this purpose.

# Managing Your Kitten's Rough Play

- Withdraw attention when your kitten starts to play too roughly. If the distraction and redirection techniques don't seem to be working, the most drastic thing you can do to discourage your cat from her rough play is to withdraw all attention when she starts playing too roughly. She wants to play with you, so eventually she'll figure out how far she can go if you keep this limit consistent. The best way to withdraw your attention is to walk away to another room, and close the door long enough for her to calm down. If you pick her up to put her in another room, then you're rewarding her by touching her. You should be the one to leave the room.

Please Note: None of these methods will be very effective unless you also give your kitten acceptable outlets for her energy, by playing with her regularly using appropriate toys.

## What Not To Do

- Attempts to tap, flick or hit your kitten for rough play are almost guaranteed to backfire. Your kitten could become afraid of your hands, or she could interpret those flicks as playful moves by you and play even more roughly as a result.
- Picking up your kitten to put her into a "timeout" could reinforce her behavior because she probably enjoys the physical contact of being picked up. By the time you get her to the timeout room and close the door, she has probably already forgotten what she did to be put in that situation.

## Aggression

Kittens can bite or scratch through the skin. In these cases it's best to seek help from a behavior specialist to work with your kitten's behavior. Be sure to keep your kitten confined until you can get professional help. Also, be sure to thoroughly clean all bites and scratches and consult your physician, as cat scratches and bites can easily become infected (see our handouts: "When the Behavior Helpline Can't Help" and "Understanding Cat Aggression Towards People."

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# PET INSURANCE 101

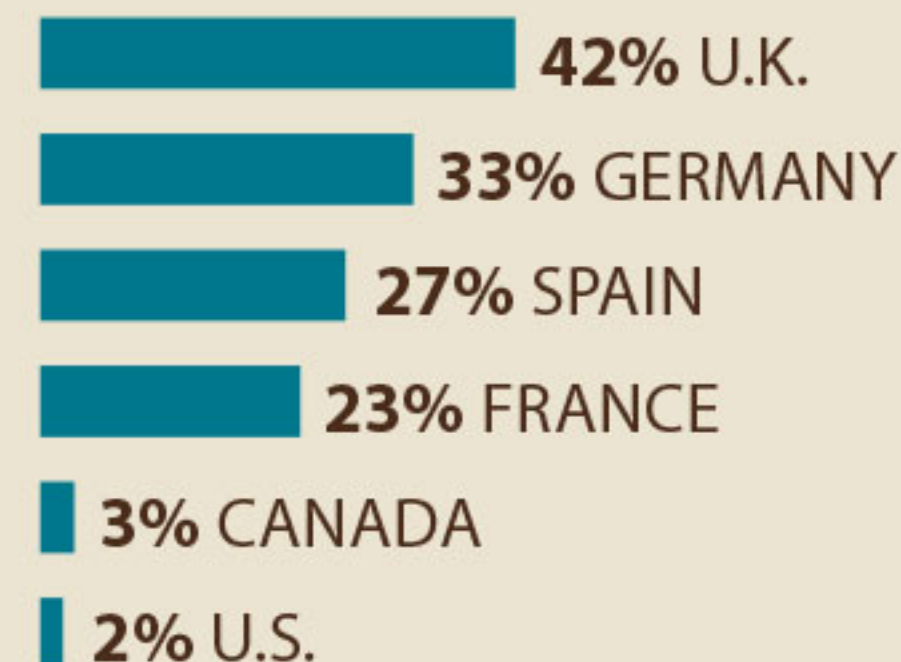
The options for pet insurance are growing every day and can be confusing. Here is an overview of what it is and what it is not, how it works, and key terms you need to know to make the right pet insurance decision for you and your pet.

## WHAT IS PET INSURANCE?

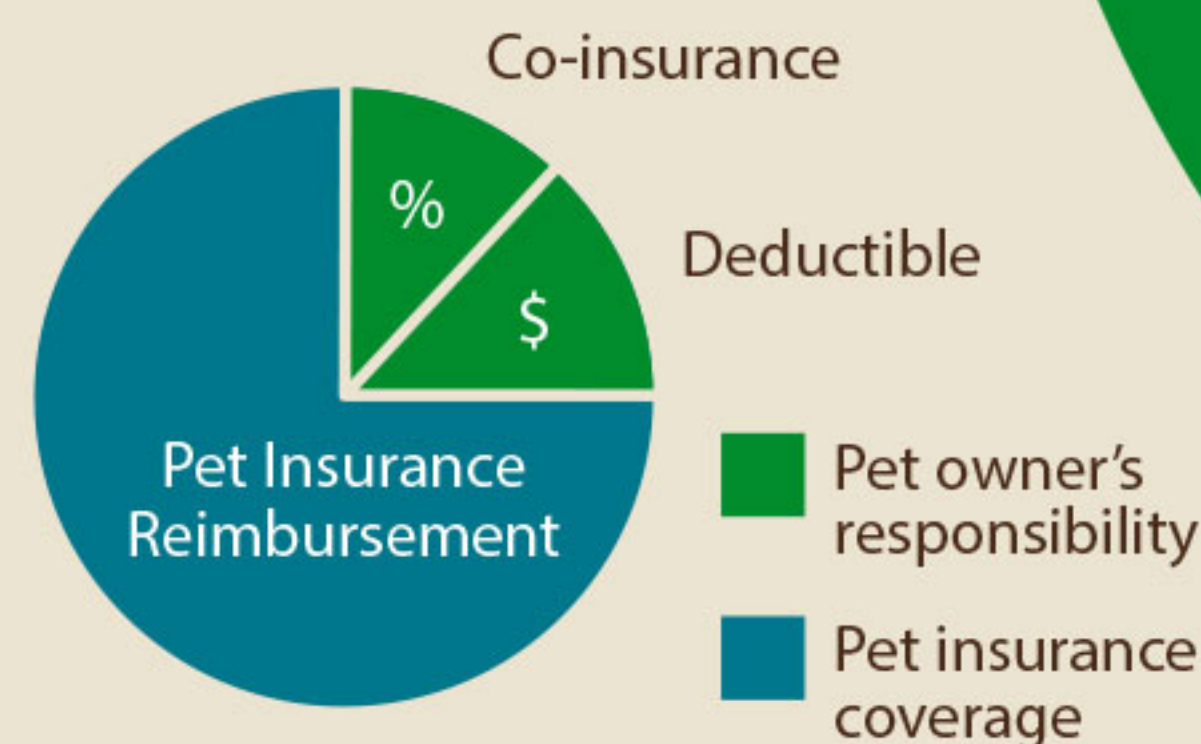
### WHAT IT IS

**Pet Insurance** is coverage for veterinary bills due to unexpected accidents or illnesses.

### PET OWNERS WITH PET INSURANCE BY COUNTRY



### TYPICAL VET BILL



### PRE-EXISTING CONDITIONS

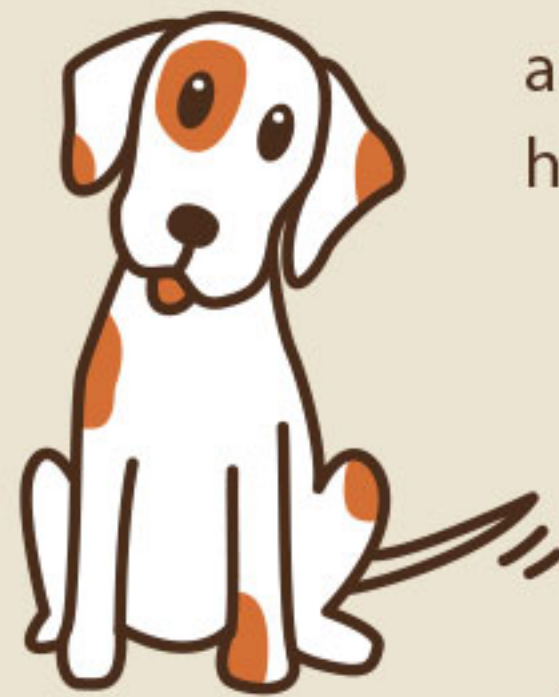
An illness or condition which first occurred or displayed signs prior to pet insurance coverage.

### WAITING PERIODS

Period of time directly following sign-up but before full coverage begins. Illnesses or accidents that occur during waiting periods will not be covered and will be considered pre-existing conditions.

### WHAT IT IS NOT

**Pet insurance** is not an investment or a health savings plan.



## WHY CONSIDER IT?

Though we don't like to think about it, most pets get hurt or sick at some point in their lives.

### MOST COMMON HEALTH PROBLEMS WITH PETS

#### DOGS

1. Ear infections
2. Skin allergies
3. Hot spots
4. Vomiting
5. Diarrhea

#### CATS

1. Lower urinary tract problems
2. Vomiting
3. Chronic kidney failure
4. Hyperthyroidism
5. Diabetes



**\$2500**

Starting vet bill for a dog's torn knee ligament

### PREMIUMS

The monthly cost for pet insurance. This will change by type and breed of pet, location, age of pet and the selected coverage plan.

### AVERAGE MONTHLY PREMIUMS

Cats • **\$12–\$36**

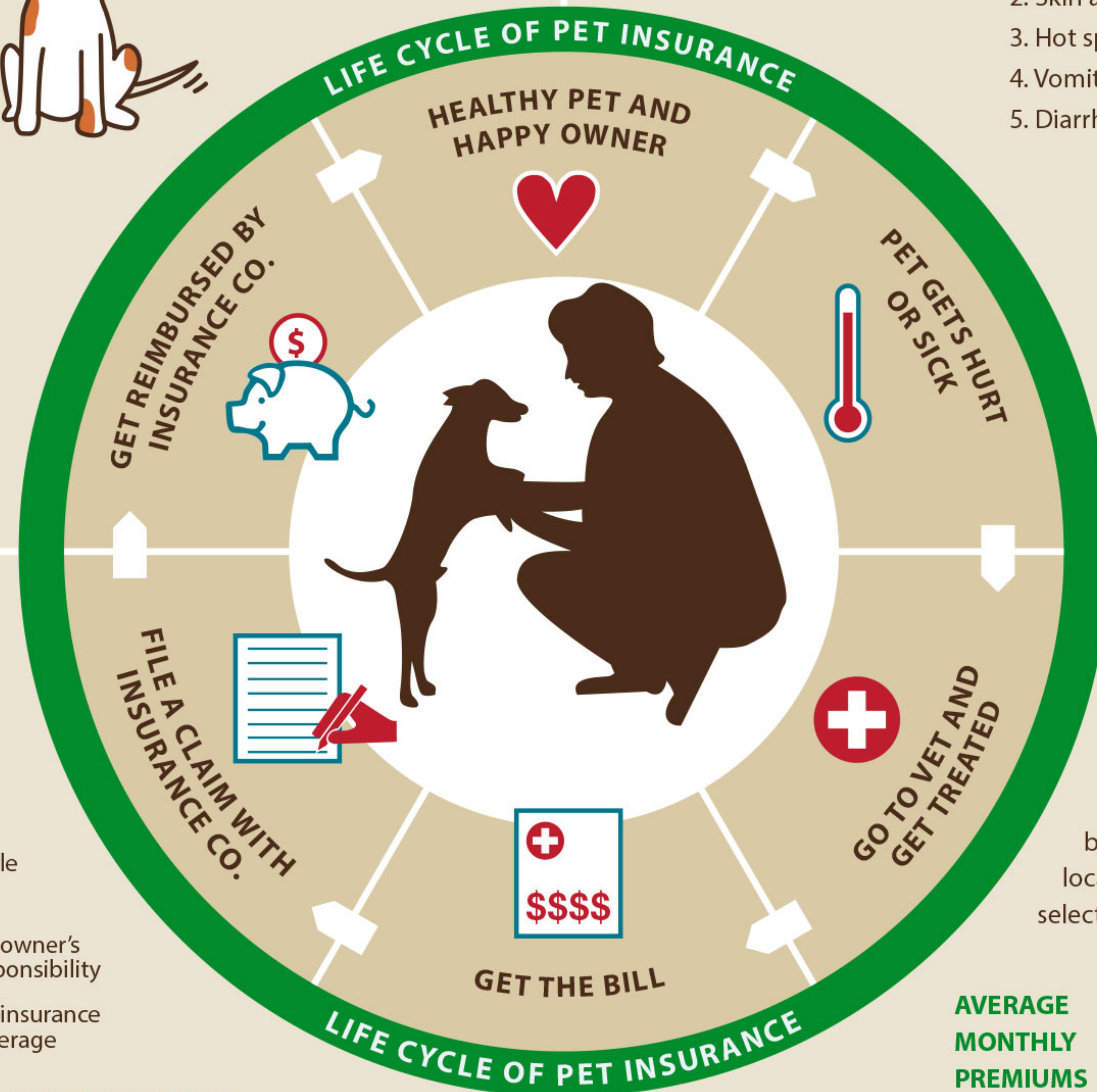
Dogs • **\$25–\$65**

### DEDUCTIBLE

The portion of the vet bill the pet owner is responsible for before the pet insurance provider will start payment.

### CO-INSURANCE

The percentage of the vet bill the pet owner is responsible for versus what the pet insurance provider will pay.



## PET INSURANCE CHECKLIST



Compare policy features, terms and conditions to find the right pet insurance policy for you AND your pet's needs — know what you're buying!

- Is the policy and information easy to understand?
- Find out what IS covered and what IS NOT covered by the different policies. Which policy fits your needs the best?
- What are the co-insurance and deductible options for the policy? Will this fit your financial situation if you need to file a claim?
- Does the company pay out based on the actual vet bill or by a benefit schedule? Understand the difference.
- Are there coverage limits per incident, per year, per lifetime? If so, understand what they are.
- Are conditions that were diagnosed one year considered pre-existing conditions the next year?
- Is the company licensed in your state and do they have a good reputation? Ask your vet and read reviews.



**trupanion**  
Medical insurance for your pet.

[trupanion.com](http://trupanion.com)

Underwritten by Omega General Insurance Company

## HOW DOES IT WORK?

## HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

### Resources:

1."2011-2012 Industry Statistics & Trends." American Pet Products Association. 2011. Web. 06 Jan. 2012. [http://americanpetproducts.org/press\\_industrytrends.asp](http://americanpetproducts.org/press_industrytrends.asp). 2.Bertholf, Amanda. "Focusing on Pet Insurance: The Myths and Truths." Veterinary Economics. DVM360, 1 May 2009. Web. 06 Jan. 2012. <http://veterinarybusiness.dvm360.com/vetec/article/articleDetail.jsp?id=596671>. 3."Coverage That Cares." Veterinary Economics Aug. 2010: 26. Web. 5 Jan. 2012. 4. DVM360. "20 Questions to Help You Choose a Pet Insurance Provider." 8 Mar. 2011. Web. 2 Jan. 2012. <http://veterinarybusiness.dvm360.com/vetec/data/articlestandard/vetec/112011/710968/article.pdf>. 5.Felsted, DVM, CPA, CVP, MS, Karen. "Don't Leave Clients out in the Cold—help Them Find Ways to Pay." Veterinary Economics. DVM360, 1 Dec. 2010. Web. 06 Jan. 2012. <http://veterinarybusiness.dvm360.com/vetec/article/articleDetail.jsp?id=700573>. 6."Pet Insurance: Affordable Pet Care Health Insurance for Pets." MyMoneyHelp.com. Web. 06 Jan. 2012. <http://www.mymoneyhelp.com/education-center/insurance/pet-insurance/pet-insurance-claims.shtml>. 7."Pet Insurance Claims: Make a Pet Insurance Claim." MyMoneyHelp.com. Web. 06 Jan. 2012. <http://www.mymoneyhelp.com/education-center/insurance/pet-insurance/pet-insurance-claims.shtml>. 8."Pet Insurance: Compare Pet Insurance Quotes from Pet Insurance Companies." MyMoneyHelp.com. Web. 06 Jan. 2012. <http://www.mymoneyhelp.com/education-center/insurance/pet-insurance/compare-pet-insurance.shtml>. 9."Pet Insurance." Wikipedia. Web. 06 Jan. 2012. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pet\\_insurance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pet_insurance). 10.Volk, John, and Christine Merle, DVM, MBA, CVP. A Veterinarian's Guide to Pet Health Insurance. Schaumburg, IL: National Commission on Veterinary Economic Issues. Print. 11."Ask the pet health insurer these questions." Washington State Office of the Commissioner. 06 Jan. 2012. <http://www.insurance.wa.gov/consumer/other/ask-pet-insurer-questions.shtml>. 12."Top Things to Know." Pet Insurance Review. 06 Jan. 2012. <http://petinsurancereview.com/101.asp>. 13."How Much Does Dog TPLO Surgery Cost?" Vetinfo. 02 Feb. 2012. <http://www.vetinfo.com/how-much-does-dog-tplo-surgery-cost.html>.



# Safe Cat Toy and How to Use Them

## SAFE TOY SELECTION FOR YOUR FELINE

A feral cat may spend half of her day going through the stalk, pounce and kill of the hunting ritual, trying to obtain enough food to sustain her litter and herself. Meanwhile, our domestic felines nosh all day long on a commercially produced, owner-prepared diet without so much effort as placing a paw on the electric can opener. Little wonder Petunia has packed on a few pounds! When we relegate our feline friends to indoors-only status, we rob them of the opportunity to work for their living. It is a far safer existence, but a more mind-numbing, sedentary one. Thus, it is up to us to enrich their environment and enhance their lives.

As luck would have it, cats are easy to amuse. There is very little in their environment that could not serve as a cat toy in a pinch. In fact, in many households, commercial cat toys gather dust while items set aside for recycling are co-opted by the cat. Bottle caps, paper shopping bags, dried-out pens, shoe boxes—what may be garbage to you is a rip-roaring good time to your cat. Am I the only one who leaves appliance cartons in the middle of the living room floor for a month or two so my cats can play hide-andseek?

### Kitty Calamities

When evaluating household items for cat-worthiness, pay attention to bits and pieces that could be chewed off and swallowed, get caught on a claw and prevent retraction or become lodged in the cat's mouth or throat. While most cats love hiding in paper shopping bags, they abhor it when, after poking their heads through the handles, they find they cannot outrun the sack which has now taken on a life all its own—"chasing" them all over the house. Simply snipping off the handles before allowing your cat access will prevent such problems.

There is no more important safety edict than "Know thy cat." What attracts him? Has he developed an oral fixation on paper curling ribbon, plastic milk cap rims or aluminum foil? If so, proper disposal of these items is critical to avoid gastrointestinal upsets in your feline; for other cats, however, these items may serve as occasional, well-supervised toys.

Commercial toys must be carefully scrutinized before being declared safe in your personal peaceable kingdom, too. Wands with fluttering mylar strips are appropriate for cats who only bat at them with their paws. But if your cat is like my girl Gracie, who puts everything she catches in her mouth, this would be a dangerous plaything.



### Kitty Cautions

Recently, the ASPCA was contacted by a consumer reporter who was investigating the safe-

ty of a battery-operated retractable cat toy, after receiving a television viewer's complaint. A little plastic "anchor" could be cast out from the handle on a fine thread and then, by pressing a button, the line would swiftly retract—with kitty in hot pursuit. While testing the toy in an open area, our adolescent shelter cat volunteer was having the time of his life stalking and pouncing on the little plastic bait. However, if used too close to furniture, there is a small chance that the cat's leg could get caught in the line—as the viewer's had. Rather than ban the toy because of what might happen in rare situations, owners should carefully evaluate the suitability of this item—or any other—for their own circumstances, select accordingly and always monitor their cat's play.

By intimately knowing our feline companion's habits and play styles, we can make the proper selections of toys. This, in turn, will provide a mentally challenging environment, stimulating exercise and just good plain fun—yielding a happier, healthier homebody.

## TOYS - HOW TO USE THEM

Although cats generally have different play styles than their canine counterparts, toys are as much a necessity for cats as they are for dogs. Toys help fight boredom and give cats an outlet for their instinctive prey-chasing behaviors. And when you are the one moving the toy around while your cat fishes for it, chases after it, or jumps in pursuit of it, playtime becomes a bonding experience for you and your cat.

### "Safe" Toys

Our mothers always told us "no playing ball in the house," but cats can usually participate in that forbidden exercise without knocking down a vase or a lamp (and being grounded for two weeks). Still, there are plenty of factors that may contribute to the safety of the toy they're batting around.

Many of those factors are completely dependent upon your cat's size, activity level, and preferences. Another factor to be considered is the environment in which your cat spends her time. Although we can't guarantee your cat's enthusiasm or her safety with any specific toy, we can offer the following guidelines

### Be Cautious

The things that are usually the most attractive to cats are often the very things that are the most dangerous. Cat-proof your home by removing string, ribbon, yarn, rubber bands, plastic milk jug rings, paper clips, pins, needles, dental floss, and anything else that could be ingested. All of these items are dangerous, no matter how cute your cat may appear when she's playing with them.



Avoid or alter any toys that aren't "cat proof" by removing ribbons, feathers, strings, eyes, or other small parts that could be chewed and ingested.

Soft toys should be machine washable. Look for stuffed toys that are labeled as safe for children under three years of age and that don't contain any dangerous fillings. Problem fillings include things like nutshells and polystyrene beads. Remember that rigid toys are not as attractive to cats.

## Recommended Toys

**Active Toys** - Round plastic shower curtain rings, which are fun either as a single ring to bat around, hide, or carry, or when linked together and hung in an enticing spot.

- Plastic balls, with or without bells inside.
- Ping-Pong balls and plastic practice golf balls with holes to help cats carry them. Try putting one in a dry bathtub, as the captive ball is much more fun than one that escapes under the sofa. You'll probably want to remove the balls from the bathtub before bedtime, or you may lose some sleep, as two o'clock in the morning seems to be a prime time for this game.
- Paper bags with any handles removed. Paper bags are good for pouncing, hiding, and interactive play. Plastic bags are not a good idea, as many cats like to chew and ingest the plastic.
- Sisal-wrapped toys, which are very attractive to cats who tend to ignore soft toys.
- Empty cardboard tubes from toilet paper and paper towels, made even more fun if you "unwind" a little cardboard to get them started.

## Comfort Toys

- Soft stuffed animals, which are good for several purposes. For some cats, the stuffed animal should be small enough to carry around. For cats who want to wrestle with the toy, the stuffed animal should be about the same size as the cat. Toys with legs and a tail seem to be especially enticing to cats.
- Cardboard boxes, especially those a little too small for your cat to fit into.

## Catnip

- Catnip-filled soft toys, which cats like to kick, carry, and rub. Catnip is not addictive and is perfectly safe for cats to roll in, rub in, or eat.
- Plain catnip can be crushed and sprinkled on the carpet or, for easier cleanup, on a towel placed on the floor. Catnip oils will often stay in the carpet, and although they're not visible to us, your cat will still be able to smell them. Catnip sprays rarely have enough power to be attractive to cats.
- Not all cats are affected by catnip. Some cats may become overstimulated to the point of aggressive play and others may become relaxed.
- Kittens under six months old seem to be immune to catnip.

## Get the Most out of Toys!

- Rotate your cat's toys weekly by making only a few available at a time. Keep a variety of types easily accessible. If your cat has a favorite, like a soft "baby" that she loves to cuddle with, you may want to leave that one out all the time.
- Provide toys that offer a variety of uses—at least one toy to carry, one to wrestle with, one to roll, and one to "baby." Hide-and-seek is a fun game for cats.
- "Found" toys are often much more attractive than a toy which is obviously introduced.
- Many of your cat's toys should be interactive. Interactive play is very important for your cat because she needs active "people time"—and such play also enhances the bond between you and your pet. Cats generally engage in three types of play—"fishing, flying, and chasing"—and all types are much more engaging for cats when you are part of them.



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*Adapted from material originally developed by applied animal behaviorists at the Dumb Friends League, Denver, Colorado.*

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# Your Cat—Indoors or Out

Ever wonder what goes on behind closed doors? Healthy, safe cats live out their entire lives, for one thing. If you want your cat to live to a ripe old age, the best thing you can do for her is keep her inside. Allowing your cat to wander around on her own, without your supervision, makes her susceptible to any of the following life-shortening—and often painful—tragedies:

- Being hit by a car
- Ingesting a deadly poison like antifreeze or a pesticide
- Being trapped by an unhappy neighbor
- Being attacked by a roaming dog, cat, or wild animal
- Contracting a disease from another animal
- Becoming lost and unable to find her way home
- Being stolen
- Encountering an adult or child with cruel intentions

Some people believe there are good reasons to allow their cat to be outdoors without their supervision, so we've included a number of these objections along with our comments and suggestions.

## ***"But I have a six-foot fence."***

Unless you have special fencing that's designed to prevent a cat from climbing out, your cat will be able to scale your fence and escape the confines of your yard. If you do have special fencing, make sure that it can keep other cats or animals from getting into your yard to injure your cat. Some companies manufacture ready-made cat fences and backyard enclosures.

## ***"But my last cat went outdoors and he loved it."***

Your cat may enjoy being outdoors, but by allowing him to go outside unsupervised, you're putting him at risk for a shortened life span. The expected lifespan of an indoor-outdoor cat will depend on several factors, including the type of neighborhood you live in and sheer luck. But, on average, cats who are allowed to roam outdoors often don't live to see age five. Cats who are always kept safely confined can live to be 18 to 20 years old.

## ***"But my cat's litter box smells."***

Scoop your cat's litter box on a daily basis. How often you actually replace (change) the litter depends on the number of cats in your home, the number of litter boxes, and the type of litter you use. Twice a week is a general guideline for clay litter, but depending on the circumstances, you may need to change it every other day or once a week. Wash the litter box with soap and water every time you change the litter; the use of strong-smelling chemicals and cleansers may cause your cat to avoid the box.



## ***"But my cat likes to sun herself."***

® Your cat can safely sun herself indoors by

lying near a window. If you're really intent on letting your cat outdoors, put her on a harness and leash and stay with her while she's taking in the rays.



## ***"But I can't keep him in."***

Keep your windows closed or install screens. Remember to always keep your doors closed and teach your children the importance of keeping the doors closed, too. It may take a few days or a few weeks, but if there are enough interesting things for your cat to play with indoors, he'll come to enjoy being indoors. Be sure to provide him with a scratching post and safe toys to bat or carry around.

## ***"But we've always let her out."***

You can change your cat's behavior. It will take time and patience, but it might save her life. When you implement your "closed door" policy, give her a lot of extra attention and entertainment. At first she may cry, but don't give in—more often than not, she'll soon be happy to stay indoors with you.

## ***"But my cat knows to avoid cars."***

Even if this were true, all it would take is another cat, a dog, or a shiny object to lure your cat into the street and into the path of traffic. Also keep in mind that not everyone will swerve to miss a cat in the road.

## ***"But my cat needs exercise and likes to play with other cats."***

Stray cats could spread viruses such as feline leukemia and other fatal diseases. If your cat needs a friend, adopt another cat who's healthy and disease-free. Cats kept safely confined do need extra attention and exercise inside, so be sure to play with your cats regularly using a variety of toys and chase games.

## ***"But my cat yowls and acts like he really needs to go outside."***

Your cat may be feeling the physiological need to mate. If this is the case, make sure your cat is spayed or neutered. Sterilized cats don't have the natural need to breed, and therefore, won't be anxious to go out to find a mate.

Transforming a cat who is allowed to roam freely outside into a safe cat will take time, effort, and patience; some cats will adapt more quickly than others. And many cat owners report that keeping cats inside actually fosters the bond between feline and human. If, despite your best efforts, your cat simply cannot make the transition, then vow to keep your next cat safely confined from the start.

## Keeping Your Cat Happy Indoors

While many cats enjoy being outside where they can hunt prey and explore their surroundings, it's a myth that going outside is a requirement for feline happiness. Playing regularly with a cat easily satisfies her stalking instinct, keeps her stimulated, and provides the exercise she needs to stay healthy and happy. In fact, the indoor cat who gets lots of attention and playtime is likely happier than the indoor-outdoor cat who is generally ignored by her human companions.

Here are some tips for safely confining your cat and making the great indoors an interesting, feline-friendly environment that meets all of your cat's needs.

- Start young. Kittens who are kept indoors usually show no desire to venture outside when they grow up.
- Provide a screened porch or other safe way for your cat to experience the outdoors. Consider building or purchasing a "cat fence" or similar enclosure. Such an enclosure can allow your cat to experience all the pleasures of the great outdoors without the risks. However, a fence may not prevent animals from entering your yard, so you should always be present when you allow your cat outside. And be sure to cat-proof the yard by checking that the fence has no escape routes and by making toxic plants, garden chemicals, and other dangerous objects inaccessible.
- If you live in a peaceful neighborhood in which you can walk without encountering loose dogs, consider buying a harness and training your cat to walk on a leash. This training takes time and patience, for both you and the cat, and it's easiest when your cat is young. Some cats can even be trained to sit on your lap while you are on the deck or patio, or harnessed and tied to a stationary object to enjoy the outdoors while you are gardening nearby (but be sure to never leave your cat alone while she is tied to a stationary object).
- Install a perch near a sunny window; padded perches can be purchased at many pet supply stores or through catalog retailers. Another option is an enclosure that sits in a window frame (much like an air conditioning unit) and provides a secure space in which your kitty can "hang out." Larger options are available that attach to the side of a house or ground-floor apartment patio. It's best to allow your cat access to these when someone is home to supervise.

- Buy a ready-made cat tree (often called a "kitty condo"), or make your own. A cat tree may stretch from floor-to-ceiling or be shorter. It provides great climbing opportunities and, in multi-cat households, creates more play and rest areas by taking advantage of vertical space.
- Play with your cat each day. Try different types of toys that recreate "fishing," "chasing," and "flying" prey. And leave "toys" such as paper bags and cardboard boxes out when you are not home.
- Give your cat a feline friend—they can provide one another with companionship and entertainment.
- Plant cat grass (available from pet supply stores) in indoor pots so your feline can graze.
- Clean the litter box regularly.

Even cats who are protected from roaming free should still be outfitted with a collar and visible identification. The occasional open window (make sure your windows have secure screens) or door offers a tempting opportunity for your cat to explore the outdoors. And your cat may become frightened and make her way outside if strangers come to work on your house or if there is a fire or similar disaster. The collar and visible ID could help someone get your pet back to you. For extra insurance, consider having your cat microchipped. If you do lose your cat, contact your local animal shelter immediately to file a report. Shelter workers can give you tips on getting your pet back home safely. Also read our tips for finding a lost pet.

If you need further assistance go to [www.petsforlife.org](http://www.petsforlife.org),  
[www.mobilespca.org](http://www.mobilespca.org) or email the Mobile SPCA  
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*Adapted from material originally developed by applied animal behaviorists at the Dumb Friends League, Denver, Colorado.*

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