



Animal
Care Centers
of NYC

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General Cat Care

Before you bring your cat home

You will need: cat food, a food dish and water bowl, interactive toys, brush, comb, bed, safety cat collar, scratching post, a litter box and kitty litter.

Feeding

You should feed your cat a high-quality cat or kitten food appropriate for his or her life stage; food should be offered one to four times a day as appropriate for your pet. Provide fresh, clean water at all times and be sure to wash and refill the water bowls daily.

You can either feed specific meals, throwing away any left-over canned food after 30 minutes, or free-feed dry food (keeping food out all the time). All cats should be fed a diet specific to their life stage and health.

Some kittens will be hesitant to eat kitten food. In these cases you can feed them kitten milk replacer or human baby food for a short period of time. Baby food should be a turkey or chicken variety and must not have any onions, garlic, or powders made from them listed in the ingredients as that can make cats very ill. Gradually mix in increasing amounts of kitten food to the milk replacer or baby food over a few days' time until your pet is eating kitten food only. Avoid offering cow's milk as it can cause diarrhea in cats and kittens.

Diarrhea is common in newly adopted pets. This can be the result of a variety of causes, including stress, diet change, parasites, or even viral or bacterial infections. It can be helpful to gradually change your pet's food over to the new diet you choose to feed over 5 to 7 days by mixing in small but increasing amounts of the new food. If you do notice that your pet is having diarrhea, please make an appointment to have him or her seen by your veterinarian for exam and, if needed, for testing to determine the underlying cause(s).

Grooming

Most cats stay relatively clean and rarely need a bath, but they do need to be brushed and combed. Frequent brushing helps keep your cat's coat clean, reduces the

amount of shedding and cuts down on the incidence of hairballs. Regular brushing is particularly important for cats with longer coats.

Handling

To pick up your cat, place one hand behind the front legs and another under the hindquarters. Lift gently. Never pick up a cat by the scruff of the neck (nape of the neck behind the ears) or by the front legs without supporting the rear end.

Housing

Please keep your cat indoors. If your companion animal is allowed outside, he or she may contract diseases, get fleas or other parasites, become lost, get hit by a car or hurt in a fight or be poisoned. Cats should have a clean, dry place of their own in the house. Line your cat's bed with a soft, warm blanket or towel. Be sure to wash the bedding regularly.

Identification

Whether or not your cat is permitted outdoors, your cat needs to wear a safety collar and ID tag. A safety collar with an elastic panel will allow your cat to break loose if the collar gets caught on something. An ID tag and implanted microchip can help ensure that your cat is returned if she becomes lost.

Litter Box

All cats need access to at least one litter box, which should be placed in a quiet, accessible location. A bathroom or utility room is a good place for your cat's box. In a multi-level home, one box per floor and at least one box per cat are recommended. Avoid moving the box unless absolutely necessary; then, do so slowly, a few inches a day. Most cats won't use a messy, smelly litter box. Scoop solids out of the box at least once a day. Dump everything, wash with a mild detergent (don't use ammonia) and refill at least once a week for clay litter, but less frequently if using clumping litter. Don't use deodorants or scents in the litter or litter box (especially avoid lemon scent) as they can be offensive or even toxic to cats.

Play

Cats delight in stalking imaginary prey. The best toys are those that can be made to jump and dance around and look alive. Your cat will act out her predator role by pouncing on toys instead of people's ankles. Don't use your hands or fingers as play objects with kittens. This type of play may cause a biting and scratching problem to develop as your kitten matures.

Claws

Cats need to scratch. When a cat scratches, the old outer nail sheath is pulled off and the sharp smooth claws underneath are exposed. Cutting your cat's claws every 2 to 3 weeks will keep the nails relatively blunt and less likely to harm arms and furniture.

Scratching

Provide your cat with a sturdy scratching post, at least 3 feet high, which allows the cat to stretch completely when scratching. It should also be stable enough that it won't wobble when being used. It should be covered with rough material such as a sisal, burlap or tree bark to further prevent household destruction. Cats also like scratching pads. To train a cat to use a post or a pad, rub your hands on the scratching surface and then gently rub the kitty's paws on the surface. When the cat starts to scratch furniture or rugs, gently say no and lure her over to the scratching post. Praise your cat for using the scratching post or pad. A sprinkle of catnip once or twice a month will keep your cat interested in it.

Health

Your cat should see the veterinarian at least once a year for an examination, and immediately if she is sick or injured. Your veterinarian will recommend which vaccines and other preventive medicines may be necessary for your cat.

Medicines and Poisons

Cats are very sensitive to a number of common medications, products, and plants commonly found

in and around the home. For example, Tylenol® is fatal for cats and giving aspirin to your cat can result in severe illness or even death. Anti-freeze, rodenticides (rat poison), and many cleaning products are highly poisonous and should be kept away from your pet at all times. Many common household plants can cause illness and sometimes death in cats who inadvertently ingest them.

You should never give any medication to your cat or kitten unless it is under the supervision of a veterinarian. If you suspect that your cat or kitten may have ingested a poisonous substance or are unsure if a product he or she has eaten is poisonous, call your veterinarian or the National Animal Poison Control Center immediately at (888) 426-4435 for information and instructions on what to do (note that a consultation fee may apply). Further information regarding poisons can be found at their website: www.asPCA.org/pet-care/poison-control/.

Ear Mites

These tiny parasites are common in cats, and can be transmitted from cat to cat. If your cat is scratching at his or her ears, shaking his or her head, or has dark brown or black gritty debris in the ears, he or she may have ear mites. You will need to call for a veterinary appointment, as your cat's ears will need to be thoroughly cleaned before medication is dispensed. Ear mites are contagious to other pets in the household.

Fleas and Ticks

Fleas and ticks are a problem that should be taken seriously. These tiny parasites feed off of our pet, can transmit many diseases and irritate the skin. Carefully check your cat once a week for fleas and ticks. If there are fleas on your cat, there will be fleas and flea eggs in your house. Consult your veterinarian. There are several new methods of flea and tick control. You may need to use flea bombs or premise-control sprays, and you will need to treat all animals in your house. Make



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sure that any sprays, powders or shampoos you use are safe for cats and that all products are compatible if used together. Cats die every year due to being treated improperly with flea and tick control products.

Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV) and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) Infections _____

FeLV is a common viral infection of cats. It is spread primarily in the saliva from cat to cat in close physical contact with each other or who share food and water bowls. It can also be spread through blood transfusions and in utero to kittens. FeLV infections can result in cancer and suppression of the immune system, leading to a variety of secondary infections. Sadly, there is no effective treatment or cure for FeLV and most infections eventually become fatal.

FIV is also a common viral infection of cats. It is spread primarily through deep bite wounds inflicted during fighting with other cats. It can also be spread through blood transfusions but is rarely spread from a queen to her kittens. FIV infections can result in an immunodeficiency syndrome similar to AIDS in people, but many cats will remain healthy and unaffected. As with FeLV, there is no cure for FIV and treatment is supportive.

Your cat can be screened for both FeLV and FIV with a simple blood test which is offered at the time of adoption. If you elected to have this test performed at AC&C before you took your cat home, please be sure to follow-up with your veterinarian to see if a second test is necessary. If you did not have this test performed, AC&C strongly recommends that you speak to your veterinarian and have your cat checked for these two very serious infections particularly before you introduce your new pet to other cats.

Upper Respiratory Infections _____

Upper respiratory infections are common in cats that have spent time with other cats in close quarters (such as at a boarding facility or an animal shelter). Like the common cold in people, most upper respiratory infections are mild and will resolve with treatment in a short period of time, but it is important to have your pet seen by your veterinarian if you notice any coughing, sneezing, nasal discharge, or red or runny eyes.



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