

What every Feline Family should know:

# Caring for your new kitten



## Make sure your new kitty is healthy

A clean bill of health by a veterinarian is important to the wellbeing of your kitten and to avoid spreading viruses, parasites, fleas or diseases to other pets. With early detection and the right preventive care, cats are living 20 years and more. Cats are complex and sensitive creatures that are masters at hiding their illness. So spotting warning signs early is essential in helping families make good choices about their cat's care.

## Vaccines and Deworming

Different veterinary hospitals may have different protocols when it comes to vaccines. We recommend two core vaccines for cats and kittens:

- 1) Distemper (FVRCP) vaccine
- 2) Rabies vaccine
- 3) (optional) Feline leukemia vaccine for cats who spend time outdoors

Given that intestinal parasites are common in kittens, we also recommend deworming. This is done with oral medication and is repeated 3-4 weeks later. Read *What every Feline Family should know: Vaccines & Deworming* at [www.thecatpracticepc.com/guides.html](http://www.thecatpracticepc.com/guides.html).

## Spay/Neuter your kitten for a healthier, more sociable pet

Spayed/neutered cats make better pets and are at less risk for serious illnesses including some cancers. Male kittens are neutered as soon as both testicles descend into the scrotum. Female kittens are spayed at around 5 months, before their first heat cycle. If allowed to have a heat cycle before spaying, your female kitten will be at much greater risk for mammary cancer. Read *What every Feline Family should know: Spay/neuter saves lives* at [www.thecatpracticepc.com/guides.html](http://www.thecatpracticepc.com/guides.html).

## Choose high-quality canned cat foods

We recommend a high quality canned cat food diet that includes brands such as Hill's Science Diet, Iams or Eukanuba. These foods are properly balanced based on the cat's age and lifestyle. The moisture in canned food helps cats get more fluid intake; it also reduces overeating since cats feel full. Dry food is calorie-packed and can cause obesity.

## Take time to introduce your new kitty to your home

To introduce your new kitten to your home, start slowly and follow these tips.

- Choose one room, such as a small bedroom, equipped with a litter box, food and water bowls, cozy bedding, scratching post and toys. This will allow your kitten to get used to new smells and sounds and also provides a "comfort zone" for your kitten to return to if he/she gets scared.
- If your kitten is an only pet, let him/her explore your home, with supervision, within the first several days. If there are other cats or dogs, keep your kitten in the room for several days so other pets get to know there is a new pet there. Then swap -- let your kitten out into the rest of the house to explore while putting the other pets in the room. After a day or two, introduce pets to each other, with supervision. Let them sniff and touch noses; hissing or growling is normal. Keep encounters short, gradually letting pets spend more time together. If pets attack each other, keep them separated for a few days; then start the process over.



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**NOTE:** Our "Feline Family" series covers many important topics to help your feline family members live longer, better and healthier lives. For other topics, or more information, go to [www.thecatpracticepc.com](http://www.thecatpracticepc.com) or call us at 248-540-3390.

### Train and socialize kittens early

Kittens, like children, have increased learning capacity. Before 14 weeks is the prime time to introduce your kitten to new situations, people and animals. Kittens are curious and love new games and experiences. Older kittens and cats can still be trained; it just takes a little longer. Cats that are not exposed to different experiences can become stressed and possibly fractious when faced with different situations. Work with your kitten while still young to get him/her used to:

- Traveling in a cat carrier
- Other animals (cats, dogs, etc.)
- People (males, females, children, seniors)
- Touching (feet, belly, ears, under tail and brushing)

### Keep kitty occupied with play and toys

Bond with your new kitten during daily play time. An important part of this is cat toys, which are important to your kitten's development. Choose small stuffed toys (so kitty can tackle and bite like a litter mate), feather wands, scratching posts and balled up pieces of paper. Avoid string or yarn which can cause life-threatening blockage if ingested. Do not use your hands/fingers/feet as this will teach your kitten that it's okay to bite and scratch you. If your kitty still bites or scratches, clap your hands or say his/her name loudly to distract from the bad behavior. Redirect your kitten to a toy or scratching post. Always replace bad behavior with a desired behavior. NEVER hit your kitten or cat. See our Me-Yow Tube™ video on ***Choosing the right cat toys is more than a game of cat and mouse.***

### Make accommodations for scratching

Cats scratch. You cannot train a cat not to scratch, but you can train him/her to scratch in appropriate areas, like a scratching post. Place the post in a high-traffic area in the house where your kitten spends a lot of time. Play with him/her around the post and make it a fun place to go.

You can also reduce scratching by keeping your kitten's or cat's nails trimmed. See our Me-Yow Tube™ video on ***Taking the edge off of nail cutting: How to make nail trims easy.***

Some cat families choose declaw to permanently remove nails. Before making your decision, read ***What every Feline Family should know: Declaw – no easy decision*** at [www.thecatpracticepc.com/guides.html](http://www.thecatpracticepc.com/guides.html). Kittens that are declawed at around 3 lbs. in weight experience less pain, heal quicker and don't require as lengthy hospitalization as older cats.



#### Choosing the right cat toys.



You'll need a smartphone and barcode scanner app like the one from [redlaser.com](http://redlaser.com)



#### Find out about trimming cat's nails.



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