A young child with blonde hair is holding a black cat. The child is looking down at the cat. The background is a soft, out-of-focus outdoor setting.

A LIFELONG GUIDE TO YOUR CAT'S HEALTH AND HAPPINESS



FOR ANIMALS. FOR HEALTH. FOR YOU.

zoetis

CAT PERSONAL INFORMATION PAGE

Name:

Date of birth:

Breed:

Colour:

Special markings:

Pet microchip
ID number:

Manufacturer:

Phone:

Pet insurance policy:

Provider:

Phone:

Veterinary clinic name:

Phone:

Veterinarian name:

Phone:

Closest emergency clinic name:
(know the location and how
to get there before the need arises)

Phone:

Name of breeder/kennel/rescue:

PET POISON HELPLINE: 1 800 213 6680

Other:

Allergies:

Food brand and type:

NOTES:



**PROGRAM THE
IMPORTANT PHONE
NUMBERS ABOVE INTO
YOUR CELL PHONE FOR
QUICK REFERENCE
WHILE TRAVELLING OR
IN THE EVENT OF AN
EMERGENCY.**

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**WELCOME
HOME**

CONGRATULATIONS!

Owning a cat can be an extremely rewarding and wonderful experience, but it is also a large responsibility. You must be ready to avoid behavioural and digestive problems, poisonings, illnesses, traumatic accidents and a variety of other preventable illnesses and emergencies that can affect kittens and cats of all ages. We hope this booklet will give you the information you may need to keep your cat healthy and safe throughout every stage of life.

Here are a few quick tips to start with:

- **Be aware:** Read this booklet in its entirety and any other resources your veterinarian gives you.
- **Be prepared:** Get to know your veterinarian well, they will be your most valuable health resource.
- **Prevent: Have your cat seen by your veterinarian at least once a year.**
 - Kittens, senior cats and ill cats will need to be seen more often.
- **Be ready to love:** Give your cat a lot of love, and get lots in return.



CAT SAFETY

PREPARING YOUR HOME FOR YOUR KITTEN

It is your kitten's new home, and for your lively and curious new friend there are a lot of potential hazards lying in wait. As a responsible pet owner, you will need to provide a safe environment for your new little kitten.

HERE ARE SOME COMMON HOUSEHOLD ITEMS THAT ARE ESPECIALLY DANGEROUS AND THAT YOU SHOULD MAKE SURE ARE OUT OF REACH:

- ❁ Batteries
- ❁ Blind/drapery cords
- ❁ Breakable objects
- ❁ Compost and garbage
- ❁ Dryer, refrigerator, freezer, and drawers – keep doors closed!
- ❁ Electrical cords
- ❁ Garbage disposal unit (i.e., garburator)
- ❁ Household cleaning products
- ❁ Magnets
- ❁ Plants
- ❁ Plastic wrap

- ❁ Nylons, socks and towels
- ❁ Medications or supplements (“childproof” does not mean “petproof”)
- ❁ Screens/windows
- ❁ Sharp objects such as a knife, needles, pins, razors, tacks, and toothpicks
- ❁ Small objects such as jewelry, staples, paper clips, coins, cotton swabs, hair pins, buttons, and twist ties
- ❁ String or string-like objects like yarn, ribbon, thread, tinsel, dental floss, and rubber bands
- ❁ Sponges
- ❁ Toilet — keep the bathroom door closed or lid down

Keep in mind that this is not a comprehensive list.

COMMON CAT POISONS

1. Topical spot-on insecticides. Make sure you never use dog flea and tick products on a cat!
2. Household cleaners
3. Antidepressants
4. Lilies
5. Insoluble oxalate plants (e.g., dieffenbachia, philodendron, etc.)
6. Human and veterinary non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs
7. Acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol® and cough/cold medications)
8. Glow sticks
9. Amphetamine human drugs — ADD/ADHD medications like Adderall® and Concerta®
10. Mouse and rat poisons (rodenticides)



You can find this list as well as a full listing at www.petpoisonhelpline.com/poisons/. Call the Pet Poison Helpline at **1 800 213 6680** or your veterinarian right away to see if your cat needs medical attention.

HERE ARE A FEW TIPS ON HOW TO KEEP SOME OF THOSE ITEMS OUT OF REACH:

- ❁ Avoid strangulation — keep blind and drapery cords tied or coiled out of reach.
- ❁ Put away or secure breakable objects. Your cat may accidentally knock over and break fragile items, then cut themselves on the broken pieces.
- ❁ Use a trashcan with a locking lid or store your trashcans under the sink. Be especially careful if you have thrown bones away as these are attractive for cats but can cause intestinal obstruction or even perforation!
- ❁ Look inside the dryer before closing the door, and keep it closed when not in use. Kittens can climb into refrigerators, freezers, and dresser drawers, so check these before closing them.
- ❁ Unplug electrical cords when they are not in use, and/or deter your cat from chewing on them by placing them in a cord protector.
- ❁ Cover garbage disposal switches. Cats may play with electric switches, such as the one for a garbage disposal unit.
- ❁ Childproof latches can prevent your curious kitten or cat from opening drawers and cabinets, while keeping potentially dangerous foods and cleaning supplies out of reach.
- ❁ Keep all medications, both over-the-counter and prescription (human and animal), in a secure cabinet and be sure to pick up any dropped pills.
- ❁ Place dangerous plants out of your cat's reach or do not have them in the house at all.
- ❁ Put all small and stringy things out of reach or inside a cabinet or drawer.
- ❁ Sponges often keep food smells, which can attract cats. Cats can chew sponges into pieces and swallow them causing an obstruction.
- ❁ Make sure your door and window screens are secure and have sturdy latches.
- ❁ Remove tablecloths from tables when not in use; kittens may be curious about what is on the table and try to climb the tablecloth.
- ❁ Keep the toilet seats down. A kitten could fall in and be unable to get out.

ALSO BE AWARE OF THE FOLLOWING TOXINS

FOODS

- Chocolate
- Onions, garlic, leeks, and chives
- Unbaked bread dough

MEDICATIONS/PLANTS

- Jimson weed, also known as devil's trumpet
- Lilies (i.e., Easter, day, tiger, Japanese, and Asiatic varieties)
- Sago palms
- Tobacco

CHEMICALS

- Batteries
- Detergents and fabric softener sheets
- Ethylene glycol, found in antifreeze
- Fertilizers, including bone meal, blood meal, and iron-based products
- Insecticides and pesticides, especially those that contain organophosphates (e.g., disulfoton, often found in rose care products)
- Kerosene, gasoline, and tiki torch fluids
- Metal or coins (ingestion of even a single zinc penny can lead to zinc toxicity)
- Strong acidic or alkaline cleaners; they include common household products like toilet bowl cleaners, lye, drain cleaners, rust removers, and calcium/lime removers
- Mothballs, especially if they contain naphthalene
- Windshield wiper fluid

SOCIALISING YOUR CAT

YOUR KITTEN'S EARLY EXPERIENCES

Cats have a very short socialisation phase — the first 4 to 16 weeks of your cat's life is an important period for behavioural and social development.

Usually, kittens are weaned around 8 weeks of age. This is around the age your new kitten will move into your home with you. By this point they have hopefully already had lots of human contact, which is important for a kitten to grow into a loving, happy, and confident cat.

When your kitten first arrives in your home with you, it can all be a bit overwhelming for them. It is recommended to introduce your kitten to a single room where you can put food/water bowls, toys, and a litter box. Give your kitten lots of love and comfort — pet them gently, talk to them softly in a calm voice. Playing is also a great way to socialise your kitten and to form a bond with them early on in your lifelong relationship. Use safe toys that you can get from your veterinary clinic or pet supply store.

It is a good idea to introduce your young kitten to different people including children. This will help them avoid developing a fear of strangers later in life. Get your kitten used to strangers but be careful that they do not scare or overwhelm the kitten (see following page on **KIDS AND CATS**).





Before introducing your new kitten to other pets in your household, visit your veterinarian to be sure they are healthy. It is also a good idea to make sure all your other pets are healthy and that all of their vaccinations are up-to-date.

New kittens can sometimes have parasites such as ear mites and fleas, or may carry a virus like feline leukemia and should not be introduced to the household before being checked. If you have to take in a new kitten before going to the veterinarian, make sure that you keep them in a separate room, avoid all contact between pets, and wash your hands thoroughly after touching the new cat. After your veterinarian gives the okay, you can start introducing your new kitten to your other pets gradually and one at a time. To help with the first encounter you can try keeping your new kitten in a carrier or behind a gate so the pets can smell each other safely. During the introduction, separate the pets at any sign of aggression. Never leave your new kitten unsupervised with any of your other pets until you are certain they get along well. Keep smaller pets, such as hamsters, fish, and birds in their cage or aquarium, safely out of reach. It can take some time for pets to adapt to each other, so be patient. It may take longer for resident adult cats to accept a new addition to the family. Make sure your other cats also have access to a “safe place” away from the kitten, such as a bed in a higher area.



KIDS AND CATS

It is really important for young kittens to interact with children early on. A cat may reject or bite kids later if they have not become used to them early on.

Small children should not pick up young kittens

Kittens sometimes try to wiggle out of a restraint so they can easily fall out of a young child's arms. Sometimes they can even scratch or bite. It's a good idea to have a small child sit on the ground to hold a kitten and be taught to let the kitten go when it wants to.

Teach kids to be gentle

A cat is NOT a stuffed animal; it hurts if children pull their hair, tail or ears. It is important to teach children to treat cats gently. Some cats do not want to be held, but they may sit next to a child who is gently petting the cat or offering treats. Remember that a cat should always be allowed to leave when they want to.

Teach kids appropriate behaviours around cats

Children want to hug cats or hold them a bit too tight. It's normal – children love cats! But sometimes cats find this threatening, and can potentially scratch or bite. It is good to teach children to let the cat approach on their own terms and to pet lightly. Screams and noise can be especially stressful to cats. Children should be taught to talk in a quiet "kitty voice", so the cat is more inclined to come near. Make sure that your cat has a "safe place" or retreat they can go to when they have had enough interaction with a child. This can be a cat house or an elevated bed. It is important to teach children to respect the cat's safe haven.

Show kids how to properly give treats to a cat

You can choose a tasty treat your cat adores but ONLY gets from children. Have children place the treat in an open palm, rather than holding it in fingers, to avoid an accidental bite. Children will sometimes like throwing the treat so that the cat will "fetch". This can be fun and encourage exercise. Just make sure they are doing it in a fun and gentle way!



Supervising play between your cat and kids

Always supervise interactions between a child and your cat so that neither one accidentally injures the other. A safe toy for children to use when playing with cats is a “fishing rod” type toy that you can find in veterinary clinics or pet supply stores. This puts children at a safe distance from the cat’s claws, and most cats absolutely love this kind of toy! Never encourage a cat to play with hands and fingers or hair. Kittens especially have really sharp claws. Keeping your cat’s claws trimmed can help with preventing scratches during play.

Be patient — Build positive experiences over time and there will be love to last a lifetime

Your new cat may need some time to feel comfortable with children. Your cat must also learn which behaviours on their part are appropriate and which ones are not. Punishing your cat for inappropriate behaviour will not help. If they learn that being around children continually results in “bad things” and punishment, they may become defensive in the presence of kids.



If your cat is growling, hissing or bites a child, make sure that you separate them immediately. Talk to your veterinarian about managing the behavioural problem in your cat.



THE LARGE DEBATES: INDOOR-ONLY AND DECLAWING

INDOOR VS. OUTDOOR DEBATE

This is an ongoing debate, and you should consider your home environment as well as your outdoor environment in the decision process. The average life span may be shorter for outdoor cats than for indoor cats. Indoor cats may be less at risk for contagious diseases, parasites, and wounds from fights with other animals. Outdoor cats, though, may be “happier” and enjoy more exercise and an enriched environment. This decision should be balanced carefully and discussed with your veterinarian. If you choose an indoor life for your cat, make sure to think about how to create an enriching environment for them. High accessible shelving and cat hiding places are some ideas you may want to think about if you choose an indoor lifestyle.



HERE IS A BALANCE OF RISKS OF KEEPING CATS INDOORS VS. OUTDOORS:

Risks of outdoor lifestyle

- ❁ Accidents involving vehicles
- ❁ Exposure to poisons or toxins
- ❁ Injuries involving fights with other animals like other cats, dogs, and wildlife
- ❁ Infectious diseases contracted from other cats: FIP, FIV, FeLV, URIs (see **INFECTIOUS DISEASES IN CATS**, page 18)
- ❁ Parasites such as fleas, ticks, mites, intestinal worms
- ❁ Becoming lost or disappearing

Risks of indoor lifestyle

- ❁ Lack of exercise and obesity, potentially leading to long-term health issues
- ❁ Behavioural problems such as anxiety and aggression
- ❁ Normal but unwanted behaviours such as spraying and clawing

See section **CAT NUTRITION AND EXERCISE: INDOOR EXERCISE** on page 15 for some creative play ideas.

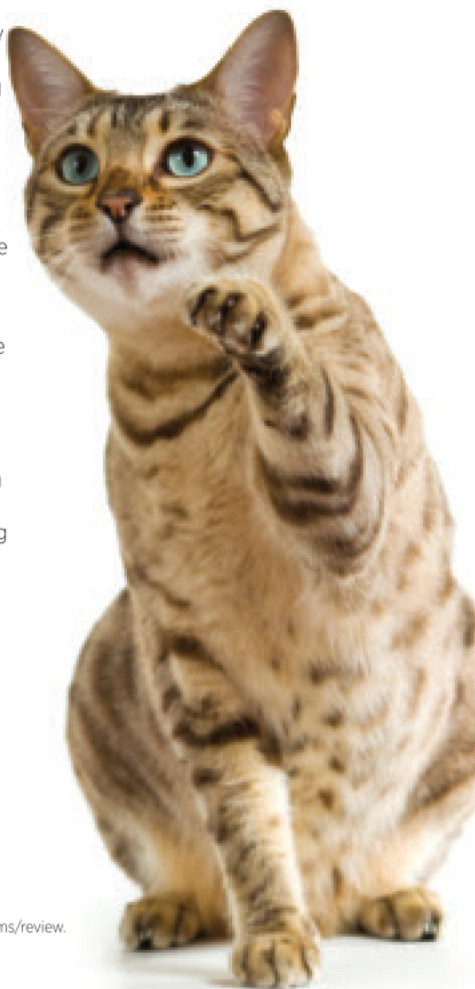
DECLAW YOUR CAT OR NOT?

Cat scratching and clawing is an innate cat behaviour. Unfortunately, like spraying, it is rarely appreciated by cat owners. For a long time, having a veterinarian remove a cat's claws was considered a normal and acceptable way to manage this. However, in 2011, the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) issued a position statement strongly discouraging the routine declawing of cats. The CVMA only advocates declawing when the bacteria on cat claws pose a significant threat to human health, such as with immunodeficient owners (i.e., the very elderly, people living with AIDS, or people undergoing chemotherapy) or when the alternative is euthanizing the animal.*

Objections to this practice primarily derive from the fact that declawing is usually a non-medically necessary amputation of the last joints of a cat's front digits. To prevent cat claws from growing back, the toe ends must be cut off. Recovering from this process hurts and takes weeks, and cats must be given pain medication during the healing process.*



Talk to your veterinarian about ways of minimizing damage caused by cat-scratching (also see section **CAT NUTRITION AND EXERCISE: INDOOR EXERCISE** on page 15).



*For more information go to http://www.cvma.net/4DCGI/cms/review.html?Action=CMS_Document&DocID=686&MenuKey=7

CAT NUTRITION AND EXERCISE



ESTABLISH A COMPLETE, NUTRITIONALLY BALANCED, AND CONSISTENT DIET

Cats require an essential amino acid called taurine which is necessary for normal heart function, vision, and reproduction. Other animals like dogs can make taurine from other amino acids in the body, but cats cannot. Since taurine is found only in animal-based protein, cats need meat-based diets to meet their nutritional requirements. They are considered strict carnivores and, therefore, cannot survive on a strictly vegetarian diet. **Ask your veterinarian to recommend the proper food for your cat, based on age, breed, health risks and activity level. Make sure you give measured portions as directed by the staff at your veterinary clinic.** Feed this well-balanced diet that your cat will thrive on and stick with it, since variety can lead to uncomfortable digestive upset.

Once you know how much to feed your cat and how often to do it, all you need to decide is the feeding schedule. **Pet owners should consult with their veterinarians to determine the best feeding schedule for their cat.**

In general, cats can be fed twice daily; divide the daily amount suggested by your veterinarian into two meals. However, all cats are different and may be fed in a number of ways, so discuss an individual schedule with your veterinarian. Some cats will be happy with meals and others will prefer to nibble all day. If you have more than one cat you may need to talk about ways to feed them individually rather than keeping the bowl always full. Keeping the bowl full can lead to weight gain and obesity. Talk with your veterinarian about different feeding strategies to keep your cat(s) healthy for a long time!

Avoid giving your cat table scraps and milk; cats do not have enough lactase, the enzyme that breaks down lactose in milk. Feeding milk and milk-based products to cats can cause vomiting, gas, and diarrhea. Your cat should always have free access to fresh, clean water that should be changed daily. Some cats prefer to drink from water fountains. You can usually find these in veterinary clinics or pet supply stores.

BE CAREFUL WITH YOUR CAT'S WEIGHT

Obesity in cats is very common in North America. It puts them at increased risk for several chronic conditions, such as diabetes, osteoarthritis, and feline hepatic lipidosis, a very serious disorder. Help your cat achieve and maintain a healthy weight by finding the right balance between feeding amount and exercise. Watch your cat's weight and body condition, and **talk to your veterinarian to determine what and how much your cat should be eating each day.** As a general rule, treats should be given in moderation and should represent five percent or less of a cat's daily food intake. The rest should come from a nutritionally complete cat food.

EXERCISE AND PLAY

Regular exercise for your cat will help ward off obesity and the health risks that come with it. It also helps prevent undesirable behaviour by providing physical and mental stimulation. Cats often like to play in the early morning and in the evening (often when we are trying to rest!). Try to play with your cat before leaving for work or in the evening.



IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO PROVIDE SAFE TOYS AND GAMES.

Talk to your veterinarian about which toys are safe for cats to play with.

- ❁ Choose toys that are intended for use by cats, such as balls, toy mice, and fishing rod toys.
- ❁ You might want to have several toys. Some may be safe to leave out all day, and some may need to be put away in case there is a risk of swallowing parts of it. For example, toys with strings attached should not be left out.
- ❁ Balls of yarn or string are not good toys for cats. These can be swallowed, even causing a dangerous obstruction which may need surgery to fix.
- ❁ Play games that direct your cat's playful energy away from you, such as chasing balls. Cats like variety, so you may want to buy a new toy once in a while! Some inexpensive toys from home include things like ping-pong balls or ruffled paper balls.



INDOOR EXERCISE

When we choose to make our cats indoor companions, we have a responsibility to provide the stimulation, play, and exercise that nature would have provided outdoors. Some of the things to provide your cat with are several scratching and climbing posts, ledges that they can climb on, and even access to elevated playing areas. You can purchase a variety of cat “playhouses” or adapt indoor areas with accessible areas where cats can climb and play. Things that can stimulate your cat to move around include hiding small toys and treats in some of the play areas, throwing small cat balls or even playing with a laser pointer! Taking responsibility for your cat's activity and exercise is an important step in ensuring them a happy and healthy life.



CAT HEALTH AND VACCINATIONS

FIRST VETERINARY VISIT

Your kitten's first trip to the veterinarian is as much about educating you as checking your cat.

During your kitten's first physical exam your veterinarian will assess all major body systems, such as eyes, ears, skin, digestive system, heart, and lungs. Your veterinarian will also talk to you about strategies for keeping your cat healthy for life. You may be asked to bring in a fecal sample when the appointment is made.

VACCINATIONS THAT CAN PROTECT YOUR PET

Vaccinations are a vital part of your kitten's veterinary care that will help prevent serious disease. Cats should be vaccinated against those diseases that are common, cause serious illness, and/or are highly contagious. Based on your cat's individual risk and lifestyle, your veterinarian will recommend the specific vaccines that are essential to protect your cat.

Vaccines generally include: feline panleukopenia (FPV), feline herpesvirus 1 (FHV-1), feline calicivirus (FCV), and rabies.

Other vaccines may include: feline leukemia virus (FeLV), feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV), and *Chlamydomphila felis*.

Necessary vaccines are based on your pet's risk factors, so if you think you may need to board your cat or plan to travel with your cat, discuss this with your veterinarian. Depending on the vaccines your veterinarian deems necessary, they will help you develop a suitable vaccination schedule. Generally, all cats receive a series of vaccinations as kittens and a booster is given a year later. After one year of age, your veterinarian will determine the need for subsequent vaccination based on the individual vaccine and the risk factors of your cat.



Your veterinarian will complete a certificate to record your cat's vaccinations. That certificate is signed by your veterinarian as a permanent record and is proof of vaccination history. Use the table on page 34 in this booklet to record your cat's vaccination regimen.

WHY REPEAT VACCINATIONS ARE NECESSARY

When your pet is vaccinated as a kitten, the immunity they receive will not protect them for the rest of their lives. To maintain protection, regular booster vaccinations of adult cats are required. Your veterinarian will let you know what the recommended interval is, depending on the specific vaccine and the lifestyle and risk factors of your cat.

NOTES

INFECTIOUS DISEASES IN CATS

Feline Panleukopenia Virus (FPV) is a highly contagious and life-threatening virus. This disease primarily affects cells in the gastrointestinal tract, as well as white blood cells in the body. The virus can be found in places where other sick cats may have been. The virus is very resilient; it is resistant to disinfectants and can remain in the environment for as long as a year, waiting for an opportunity to infect a host. Non-vaccinated cats that visit a contaminated area can then catch the disease; there is no need to come directly in contact with another cat. The signs of feline panleukopenia are fever, appetite loss, diarrhea, and/or vomiting. These cats can rapidly become dehydrated, and they quickly become lethargic and stop eating. Vaccination is an effective way to protect your cat from this disease. It is highly recommended that all cats be vaccinated against FPV.

Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis (FVR) is caused by feline herpesvirus 1 (FHV-1). FVR is one of the most common causes of upper respiratory infections in cats, and many cats are exposed to this virus at some point in their lives. Cats of all ages are at risk for feline herpes, but kittens are particularly at risk. Cats in crowded or stressful conditions or with weak immune systems often develop more severe symptoms, as can kittens. Symptoms include sneezing, congestion, watery eyes and nose, and ulcers on the tongue. Once infected, most cats cannot get rid of the virus, but symptoms can be managed. With medication, nutrition and supportive care, most cats will make a successful recovery but may relapse again in their lives. Some cats even have on-and-off signs of chronic respiratory disease. Fortunately, feline herpes can be effectively prevented through vaccination.

Feline Calicivirus (FCV) infection is another common respiratory disease in cats. The clinical signs can resemble those of feline herpes. The virus attacks the respiratory tract — lungs and nasal passages — the mouth, with ulcers forming on the tongue, the intestines, and the bones, muscles, and joints. It is highly contagious in unvaccinated cats. FCV can occur in cats of any age, but young kittens have been found to be the most at risk. This virus can be prevented by vaccinating your kitten.

Rabies is a fatal viral disease that attacks the brain and the nervous system, and can affect both you and your cat. Even if your cat does not come into direct contact with infected wild animals, there is still the risk of transmission when broken skin comes into contact with infected saliva. In many communities it is mandatory that your cat is regularly vaccinated against rabies. Check your city's bylaws and seek your veterinarian's recommendations for protecting your cat.

Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV) is one of the most commonly diagnosed causes of disease and death in domestic cats. Cats become infected by their mother or by coming in contact with other infected cats. Because the infection does not always show symptoms, any new cat entering a household — and any sick cat — should be tested for FeLV. When symptoms do occur, they can appear in almost any form. Symptoms include lack of appetite, lethargy, fever, gingivitis, enlarged lymph nodes, and weight loss. Diarrhea and/or vomiting may be present. Other symptoms may develop as well. This virus can be prevented by vaccinating kittens at a young age.

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) is a slow-acting virus in which a cat's immune system becomes progressively suppressed. FIV is similar to HIV in humans, but the FIV virus can only be transmitted between cats. FIV makes the cat susceptible to various secondary infections. Initially there may be no signs of an FIV infection, but later signs may include gingivitis, enlarged lymph nodes, or other secondary infections. FIV is passed from cat to cat through bite wounds, so cats that have access to outdoors, especially those who fight with other cats, are most at risk. Because the infection does not always show symptoms, any new cat entering a household — and any sick cat — should be tested for FIV. Talk to your veterinarian about strategies for preventing FIV.

Chlamydomphila felis causes conjunctivitis and respiratory problems in infected cats. The *Chlamydomphila felis* vaccine is recommended in multi-cat environments where the infection is known to exist.



EXTERNAL PARASITES THAT CAN HARM YOUR CAT (ECTOPARASITES)



ECTOPARASITES

are those that
live on the cat.

FLEAS



Of all the ectoparasites that affect cats, fleas are perhaps the most common. Fleas can transmit infectious agents, such as tapeworms. Fleas are a major cause of skin irritation in cats, causing them to bite and scratch themselves and often causing significant damage to the skin in the process. Some cats may even be allergic to fleas, causing severe itching, even if there are only a few fleas. Most importantly, the adult fleas that you can see on a cat only represent 5% of the entire flea infestation. Unfortunately, the remaining 95% of the infestation can be found in the cat's home, in the form of eggs, larvae, and pupae. Fleas will continue to re-infest a cat until they are eliminated from the home environment. There are multiple flea preventatives on the market. **Your veterinarian can recommend a safe and effective product** that will kill the fleas in your home and on your cat, as well as protect your cat from a broad spectrum of other parasites. Make sure you also talk to your veterinarian about all of the other pets in your household (including exotic or pocket pets) as they may also need to be treated at the same time. Your veterinarian will make sure to recommend a treatment that is safe for all of your pets.



TICKS

Ticks are found on cats, but sometimes they are missed since cats tend to groom themselves more thoroughly, removing the ticks in the process. Cats that spend time outside will be most affected by ticks. Ticks feed on the blood of their host animals, potentially causing skin irritation or infection. Rarely, disease can also be transmitted to cats, so make sure you talk with your veterinarian if you frequently find ticks on your cat. If you remove any ticks, remember to take them with you when you visit the veterinarian.

Avoiding tick-infested areas is the best prevention. Ticks are visible to the naked eye, so during the warmer months, it's a good idea to check your cat regularly for these parasites. Run your hands over your cat's fur to check for ticks, paying close attention to their ears, head, neck, belly, and feet. Ask your veterinarian to show you how to remove ticks on your pet.

Products are available from your veterinarian to manage tick infestations on your pet.



MITES

Cats and kittens can be the hosts to several species of mites, and we will talk about the top three.

Ear mites

Ear mites are the most common type of mite found in cats. They are small parasites (called *Otodectes cynotis*) that can infest the ear canals and surrounding skin of cats, causing severe itching. Cats that are infected with ear mites will typically scratch at their ears excessively and shake their heads. These mites cannot be transmitted to people. Young cats are the most vulnerable to getting ear mites. Treatment of an ear mite infestation usually involves applying medication into the ear canals or administration of topical medication on the skin.

It is recommended to discuss the treatment options with your veterinarian.

Treatments may have to be repeated over a certain timeframe; your veterinarian will prescribe a specific plan, and it is important to follow the exact instructions provided. Make sure you tell your veterinarian about other pets in the household as they may need to be treated at the same time.

Notoedric mange

Notoedres cati infections usually affect the head and especially the ears; these infections are intensely itchy. Hair loss and sore skin are apparent signs of the disease. Later the fur can become covered with greyish scales and crusts. This is a treatable medical condition, but is highly contagious for other animals and humans. **If your cat has an itchy skin condition, call your veterinarian to have them evaluated.** Mites can be collected from the skin and identified in the veterinarian's office to confirm an infection.

Cheyletiella

Commonly known as "walking dandruff", these tiny mites look like flakes of white dandruff that move. They can also infect dogs and people. The mites generally cause moderate skin irritation. They can be prevented and treated with medication that would be recommended by your veterinarian. **Make sure you call your veterinarian if your cat has an itchy skin condition.** The signs of several parasites on cats' skin and other conditions are very similar, and your veterinarian can do some simple sampling tests to attempt to identify the type of parasite infecting the cat and may also recommend other tests and treatment plans.



LICE

Lice are small insects that feed by chewing on the skin of the cat. Left untreated, they can grow to be an infestation on the cat's body. Cat lice are not as common as cat fleas, and are most often seen where sanitary practices are poor. The lice cause itching and scratching, and can make pets crazy with all the crawling and biting. The good news is that lice seldom cause long-lasting problems and cannot be transmitted to humans. **Your veterinarian can recommend a safe and effective product that will kill the lice on your cat.**

INTERNAL PARASITES THAT CAN HARM YOUR CAT (ENDOPARASITES)



ENDOPARASITES
are those that
live in the cat.



HEARTWORM

Heartworm is a special type of worm that is different from intestinal worms. Mosquitoes spread heartworm — the mosquito ingests larva from the blood of an infected animal, and then deposits the heartworm larvae under the skin as it feeds again on another animal. Heartworm disease in the cat is very different from the disease in the dog. Many cats react severely to heartworm larvae as they move through the body. If your cat develops a heartworm infection, it can cause severe respiratory disease and can be deadly. **Speak to your veterinarian to find out if heartworm prevention is necessary for your cat.**



INTESTINAL WORMS

Roundworms, hookworms, and whipworms are common internal parasites. These parasites live within the gastrointestinal tract of animals and can cause diarrhea, gas, anemia, poor coat quality, loss of body condition, etc. Intestinal worms are very common in kittens and are usually acquired from the mother. **It is important to have your veterinarian perform fecal exams and deworm your kitten regularly.** Deworming treatments will occur multiple times as a kitten and will continue throughout the cat's life, especially if your cat goes outdoors. Treatments currently available are safe and have a wide spectrum of activity, often treating for several different types of parasites.

Tapeworms are another type of gastrointestinal parasite. Tapeworms can also cause diarrhea and weight loss/poor body condition. Tapeworms can be passed in two main ways. First, fleas can carry and spread tapeworms to the animals that they infect when the infected cat ingests fleas through grooming. Second, tapeworms can be carried and spread by rodents, or by eating raw meat. Cats that hunt and eat these animals can pick up tapeworms. Owners tend to discover tapeworms when they spot worm segments ("rice particles") around their pet's anus. **If you suspect tapeworms, see your veterinarian.**

TOXOPLASMOSIS

Toxoplasmosis is a disease caused by the parasite *Toxoplasma gondii*, which can be found in garden soil and raw meat. Cats can get toxoplasma infection by killing and eating prey infected by the parasite. For cats that are not already immune the disease may cause mild diarrhea and a loss of appetite, but most commonly there are no obvious signs of infection in the cat; the infection can also affect the lungs, liver, and nervous system. Toxoplasmosis can also be passed on from cats to humans through contact with cat feces, but the far more common way to contract the parasite that causes toxoplasmosis is through eating raw or undercooked meat, or exposure to garden soil or sandboxes where infected cats may have defecated. People do not get the disease through direct contact with a cat. If a woman is infected while pregnant, it can lead to developmental problems of the child to be born. People with compromised immune systems should also take proper hygienic precautions to protect themselves against exposure to the disease. To try to prevent exposure to toxoplasmosis, make sure that you thoroughly cook meat, clean vegetables from the garden, and handle soil or litter boxes with gloves, carefully washing your hands after. If you are concerned about the possibility of contracting toxoplasmosis, you should discuss this with your doctor.





PREVENTIVE CARE is very important for your cat's ongoing health. In the long run, it will help minimize the lifetime cost of caring for your cat. Following your veterinarian's recommendations for preventive care also gives you the best shot at keeping your cat healthy and happy for a long time. Below you will find a list of recommendations



LIFELONG CARE FOR YOUR CAT*

PREVENT

Regular wellness exams can help your veterinarian discover health problems early so that these can be treated in the best way for your cat. During a wellness exam, your veterinarian will want to gather information about the life and habits of your cat, as well as do a thorough physical examination, looking at eyes, ears, mouth, skin, heart, lungs, bones, and digestive system to name only a few!

- ✿ Kittens will be examined several times during their first year of life.
- ✿ Healthy adult cats should be examined at least once yearly.
- ✿ Older cats or cats suffering from a chronic disease need to be examined more often.
- ✿ Ask your veterinarian how often your cat should be examined.

Preventive Care includes:

Vaccinations can prevent many life-threatening diseases, and can help keep both your cat and your family healthy and safe. Your veterinarian will determine which vaccines are necessary for your cat.

- ✿ Vaccination for feline panleukopenia, feline herpesvirus-1, feline calicivirus, and rabies.
- ✿ Other vaccines according to age and lifestyle, such as feline leukemia virus, feline immunodeficiency virus, and *Chlamydomydia felis*.

Parasite Prevention includes:

- ✿ Monthly prevention for heartworm, intestinal parasites, and external parasites such as ticks and fleas.

Parasite prevention needs to be administered during the at-risk season depending on your geographical location. Talk to your veterinarian about what is recommended for your cat.

Other important parasites include intestinal worms, fleas, and ticks. Some of these parasites can infect humans as well, so make sure you have a complete discussion with your veterinarian about parasite prevention and management.

Recommended preventive care can also include microchipping, spaying/neutering, nutrition and supplement counseling, dental care, and tips for grooming and training.

*American Animal Hospital Association and American Veterinary Medical Association. AAHA-AVMA Feline Preventive Healthcare Guidelines, 2011. Available on line at aahanet.org or avma.org.

to prevent, detect and treat diseases. It is very important that you talk with your veterinarian about which are important for your kitten/cat. Of course, since your kitty is unique, your veterinarian may recommend a slightly different approach, so make sure you listen to your veterinarian's advice first!



DETECT

Early detection of medical problems can ensure prompt treatment and potentially prevent consequences from disease progression.

These are regular tests that your veterinarian may recommend for your cat:

- ✿ **Retrovirus testing** (feline leukemia and feline immunodeficiency virus). All cats should be tested to determine their status. Some cats may need to be tested more frequently.
- ✿ **Regular fecal testing** as recommended by your veterinarian and depending on your geographical location.

Other tests that may be recommended:

- ✿ Blood, urine, and other diagnostic tests that may detect diseases such as kidney disease, thyroid conditions, diabetes, and liver problems to only name a few.
- ✿ Disease-screening tests such as x-rays of the cardiovascular or musculoskeletal systems that may allow for early intervention of occult disease.

Tests may be recommended with a regular check-up, prior to a procedure requiring general anesthesia, or because you are noting changes in your cat's habits or health status.

TREAT

Sometimes, despite the best preventive care possible, cats develop medical conditions that can hopefully be cured or managed in the best way possible.

Some diseases are very common in cats such as skin conditions, osteoarthritis and kidney and heart disease. Sometimes medical conditions can be cured, but in other instances, they can be managed so that your cat stays comfortable and as healthy as possible for a long time.

Your veterinarian will make sure your cat gets the best care possible and is likely to make several specific recommendations depending on your cat's condition:

- ✿ **Medication:** Make sure you give all medication as prescribed, respecting the dose, duration, and administration schedule on the prescription.
- ✿ **Surgery:** Some medical conditions require surgical intervention.
- ✿ **Nutrition and supplements:** Your veterinarian will make specific recommendations for the best option for your cat. The products that your veterinarian carries are the ones they trust the most.
- ✿ **Other recommendations:** exercise, physical rehabilitation, etc. should be followed carefully.
- ✿ **Follow-up:** It often takes more than one visit to treat a medical condition. Make sure you go to your follow-up appointments and contact your clinic if you are worried about your cat's condition.

NEUTERING OR SPAYING YOUR KITTEN



The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) considers spaying and neutering to be an important part of responsible pet care, both because they help fight cat overpopulation, and because of the health and behavioural benefits to the animals. It is strongly recommended that all cats not part of a responsible breeding program, be spayed or neutered before sexual maturity (age 5 months), except where there are valid health or behavioural benefits for delaying the procedure.

This position statement can be viewed at:

<http://www.canadianveterinarians.net/documents/dog-and-cat-spay-castration#.UulShjrbzI>

Speak to your veterinarian about when to schedule an appointment.



NEUTERING (FOR MALES)

Neutering can significantly promote cat health and safety. For example, neutering eliminates the risk of testicular cancer in males and tends to reduce a cat's instinctual desire to roam (i.e., leave the home); there are many benefits to reduced roaming in cats, like avoiding threats such as fights with other animals and managing cat overpopulation. Even with "indoor" cats, this can be a problem. Intact males tend to try to escape the house.

Neutering reduces the sex hormones in male cats that make them more likely to be aggressive with other felines. Another benefit of neutering is reduction or elimination of marking territory with urine. Also, intact male urine smells extremely strong, so neutering will help manage the urine smell. It is true that a less vigorous desire to roam caused by neutering reduces the number of calories a male cat needs. He may gain weight as a result, but dietary changes recommended by a veterinarian can reverse this and keep your cat at a healthy weight.

SPAYING (FOR FEMALES)

Spaying can significantly promote cat health and safety. For example, spaying female cats before sexual maturity reduces the risk of mammary gland tumours and eliminates the risk of ovarian and uterine cancers, and uterine infections. Spaying tends to reduce a cat's instinctual desire to roam (i.e., leave the home). Fertile females will reproduce, contributing to the feline overpopulation. Even with "indoor" cats, this can be a problem. Many cats escape, at least from time to time.

Spaying eliminates the fertile period called estrus ("heat"), during which sexually mature female cats will repeatedly yowl to attract nearby males. Once neutered, these periods will stop. Although most often done by males, some intact female cats mark territory with urine too. Spaying does not affect a cat's personality. Hunting skills, playfulness, and general activity levels do not typically change after they have been sterilized.

MICROCHIPPING

A PREVENTIVE MEASURE TO CONSIDER

Microchipping offers reassurance should your pet become lost. Microchipping permanently identifies your pet with a very small device that is about the size of a grain of rice. It is embedded underneath your pet's skin, usually between the shoulder blades. The microchip is encoded with unique information about your pet, which links to a national pet database. If your pet is lost, the microchip can be scanned and may help reunite you.



Even if you keep your cat safe inside, microchipping is still advised! Doors can be left open, screens can come loose, or a person doing work on your home or a guest may accidentally let the cat out. No matter how careful you are, there is a chance your cat could get out, and without ID their chances of getting home are diminished.

Microchipping is generally done at an early age, and your kitten may already be microchipped when you get them (remember to update changes, such as new owner details and changes of address, as soon as possible).

Ask your veterinarian for further details about microchipping at your kitten's first check-up.



PET HEALTH ITEMS TO KEEP ON HAND

BE PREPARED FOR EMERGENCIES

It would be a good idea to take a pet first aid class or to get a first aid manual. There are many manuals on the market, and some pet first aid courses may even include one. An accurate guide can be handy for treating minor injuries and illnesses at home, and it can also be useful for knowing when it is time to seek professional medical help. Knowing appropriate first aid is an important first step, but having the tools to properly administer it cannot be overlooked.

Remember that a cat who is frightened or in pain will be unpredictable and may potentially scratch or bite. You should own a cat carrier or a large, sturdy box with blankets or towels inside and with air vents in the top, so your cat may be safely transported by motor vehicle, if need be. Never try to transport a cat that is not securely contained. You can use a towel if you ever need to keep your cat still for a visual inspection or treatment. This wrapping helps you do what you have to and protects you from claws if they become agitated or scared.



Buy a feline first aid kit or gather basic medical supplies yourself and keep them in a water-resistant container. Store the kit where it is easy to access.



A CAT'S FIRST AID KIT COULD INCLUDE:

- ❁ Bottle of sterile saline solution (for flushing eyes and wounds)
- ❁ Disinfectant (such as chlorhexidine 0.05%)
- ❁ Small tube of triple antibiotic ointment (for skin abrasions)
- ❁ Gauze, cotton roll, and bandage tape
- ❁ Cohesive bandage cover, such as VetWrap
- ❁ Bandage scissors (i.e., with blunted blade tips)
- ❁ Tongue depressors (for splinting)
- ❁ Tweezers
- ❁ Latex gloves

Start with the list above and then talk to your veterinarian about other recommended supplies to include, if any.



If you are unsure of what to do for your cat in a medical emergency, call your veterinarian for advice, and be ready to take your cat to a local veterinary clinic or animal hospital immediately.



MOST COMMON DISEASES IN CATS



Cats, like people, sometimes get sick. Here are common infectious diseases and conditions that affect cats. It may help you be better informed for when to take your cat to your veterinarian. **Always call your veterinarian if you suspect a medical condition in your cat!**

FREQUENT MEDICAL CONDITIONS

Colitis/Constipation: Colitis means inflammation of the large intestine. While the most evident sign of colitis is diarrhea, cats may also develop constipation. Signs include straining to defecate, lack of appetite, dehydration, and vomiting. Sometimes, mucus and blood can also be seen in the stools. Visit your veterinarian; they will test for the underlying cause and treat accordingly.

Diabetes: Like humans, cats can suffer from diabetes too. This is usually seen in older, overweight cats. Symptoms include increased thirst and urinating, urinating outside the litter box, lethargy, and increased appetite. Diabetes is a treatable condition, and it is very important to bring in a cat that is drinking more and urinating more often. Diabetes is easier to treat if taken on early in the course of the disease. If you see those symptoms take your cat to your veterinarian.

Ear infections in cats have many causes. These might include mites, bacteria, fungi, and allergies. Have your cat checked if they are showing symptoms such as ear discharge, head shaking, red, irritated ears, and sensitivity to ears being touched.

Hyperthyroidism: Take your cat to your veterinarian if they start drinking and peeing a lot and show aggressive and nervous behaviour. Cats with hyperthyroidism may also seem hyperactive, vomit and/or lose weight while eating more than usual. This condition is usually seen in older cats. Cats with hyperthyroidism usually have a mass on their thyroid gland that your veterinarian can palpate. Because the clinical signs are similar, and it can be difficult to differentiate kidney disease, diabetes, and hyperthyroidism on a physical examination alone, veterinarians will usually recommend doing blood and urine tests to confirm the diagnosis.

Gastrointestinal inflammation/ Diarrhea: Diarrhea and vomiting are a sign of gastrointestinal inflammation. These signs may be due to a variety of causes, including diet changes, eating certain foods, intestinal parasites, and even kidney disease, among others; visit your veterinarian if your cat is vomiting, has diarrhea, stops eating, and/or looks lethargic. Your vet will possibly recommend supportive care either at home or at the veterinary hospital and potentially some diagnostic tests such as a fecal examination, x-rays, and blood tests.

Lower urinary tract disease: Lower urinary tract disease can quickly become life-threatening, especially if there is a blockage caused by crystals, stones, or plugs in male cats. Take your cat to your veterinarian if you see any of the following signs: urinating outside of the litter box, straining, blood in urine, crying out while attempting to urinate, not being able to urinate, excessive licking of genitals, not eating or drinking.

Renal failure: This is a serious condition which is common in older cats. The main symptom is excessive drinking and urinating, but the cat may also show signs of drooling, lethargy, weight loss, and anorexia (not eating). Because the clinical signs are similar, and it can be difficult to differentiate kidney disease, diabetes, and hyperthyroidism on a physical examination alone, veterinarians will usually recommend doing blood and urine tests to confirm the diagnosis. Blood tests at your cat's regular wellness visits can detect this condition early.

Skin conditions: If your cat scratches, or licks its skin a lot, has skin redness, or loses fur in patches, you need to have them seen by your veterinarian. Many different diseases can cause skin problems in cats, such as fleas and mites, ringworm, and skin allergies. Some of these can even be transmitted to other cats, dogs, and humans, so it is very important to consult your veterinarian if you see any of these signs appear on your cat.

Upper respiratory virus: If your cat is sneezing, sniffing, coughing, has runny eyes or nose, and has mouth and nose ulcers, it may be caused by an upper respiratory virus. The two main viruses are the feline herpes virus and calicivirus (See **INFECTIOUS DISEASES IN CATS**, page 18) but there are also other infectious agents that can cause similar signs. Take your cat to your veterinarian for diagnosis and treatment promptly, and remember that these viruses are contagious to other cats.



GROOMING YOUR CAT



BRUSH FREQUENTLY

Cats look after their own coats quite well. Their rough tongues are like mini-brushes, removing dead hair and distributing oils through the coat. However, they still need a helping hand. Regular brushing sessions will help you bond with your cat, as well as keep your cat's hair in good condition by preventing tangles, mats, and shedding. It also allows you to check for the presence of skin lesions and parasites.

If your cat has short hair, you should brush them at least once a week. Use a metal comb and work through the fur from head to tail, then use a bristle or rubber brush to remove any dead and loose hair.

If your cat has long hair, you may need to brush them almost every day. Comb the belly and legs, be sure to untangle any knots, then brush their fur in an upward motion with a bristle or rubber brush. To brush the tail, make a part down the middle and brush the fur out on either side. Remember: any fur on the brush is fur that won't transfer to furniture so brushing your cat will keep your house cleaner too!

CLIP NAILS

Indoor cats do not wear down their claws as quickly as outdoor ones do, so they can overgrow. If left untrimmed they can grow into a cat's foot pads, leading to infection, pain, and difficulty walking. Declawing is never a good option for a cat (see section **THE LARGE DEBATES: INDOOR-ONLY AND DECLAWING: DECLAW YOUR CAT OR NOT?** on page 12) Check your cat's claws every couple of weeks to see if they need to be clipped.

It is a good idea to get your cat used to having their feet touched before you attempt a nail trim. You can get small kittens and even adult cats used to having their feet touched by handling their feet and offering them rewards like favourite treats when they cooperate.

Never use scissors to trim your kitten's claws. Use special cat nail clippers. **Have your veterinarian or groomer show you how to handle these clippers correctly**, to avoid cutting the vein in the claws. If you have any doubts, have your veterinarian or groomer do the trimming.



CLEAN TEETH

It can be a bit tricky to brush your cat's teeth! Adult cats can be more resistant so it's a good idea to get them used to the brush when they are young. You can start getting your cat used to having his teeth brushed by letting them lick the toothpaste, then gently starting to apply some paste on the front teeth. Use gauze pads or a soft rubber toothbrush, designed specially for cats, along with toothpaste also made specifically for cats. Using the toothbrush, or wrapping a strip of gauze around your index finger, dip it into the feline toothpaste. With the cat on your lap, rub your finger or toothbrush on a tooth, concentrating on the area adjacent to the gums. You only need to brush the outside of your cat's teeth. There are different flavors of cat toothpaste, so talk to your veterinarian about the different options if your cat doesn't seem to enjoy yours.

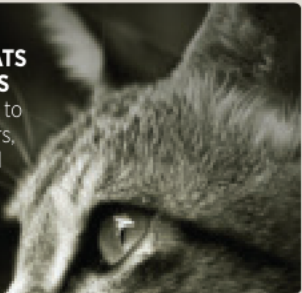


BATHE IF NECESSARY

Shorthaired cats do not need to be bathed, unless they become soiled or have a skin condition. For longhaired breeds, the occasional bath will help keep their coat in good condition and prevent a build-up of grease. Cats don't always like bathing, but patience and persistency can allow for them to be tolerated well. **Your veterinarian will be happy to advise you how to bathe your cat and will recommend a special cat shampoo.**

EAR INFECTIONS ARE COMMON IN CATS AND YOU SHOULD CHECK YOUR CAT'S EARS REGULARLY.

Ask your veterinarian to show you how to safely clean your cat's ears, as well as which product to use. You should not use cotton swabs to clean your cat's ears as they can push wax down deeper in the canal and even perforate the eardrum should you go too deep.





KEEPING YOUR CAT HAPPY, HEALTHY AND SAFE

A HEALTHY LIFE INCLUDES YOUR VETERINARIAN:

1. Yearly physical exams (or as advised)
2. Parasite control
3. Monitoring changing nutritional needs
4. Vaccinations as needed
5. Lab screening tests as recommended

Paying attention to all aspects of your cat's health is the best way to create a truly wonderful lifelong relationship with your four-legged friend.



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