



KITTEN RECOMMENDATIONS GUIDE



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APPOINTMENTS

Most kittens will need to be seen by a veterinarian every 3-4 weeks from the time they are adopted until 6 months of age. During these visits, we will make sure your new family member is up to date on vaccines, staying healthy as they develop, and discuss common questions and concerns.

VACCINES

We recommend vaccinating your new kitten against some of the infectious diseases that they are at risk for. The vaccine's aim is to help your pet's immune system be more prepared to fight these diseases should they ever be exposed to them. We follow the American Association of Feline Practitioners' recommendations for feline vaccines. We will work together during our first appointment to determine the best vaccine schedule for you and your cat.

We recommend your kitten be vaccinated for the following during their first six months:

- Rabies
- FRCP (Feline Rhinotracheitis, Calicivirus, and Panleukopenia viruses)
- FeLV (Feline Leukemia Virus)

KITTEN LAB TESTS

We recommend your kitten have the following tests done in their first six months:

- Fecal test during first or second visits
- A Feline Leukemia (FELV) and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) blood test
- Pre-operative blood tests prior to spay/neuter

PARASITE PREVENTION

Kittens are often born with intestinal parasites from their parents and/or obtain parasites from outdoors. All kittens should have a fecal test performed to check for intestinal parasites. These parasites can potentially cause serious health concerns for your young kitten if left untreated.

At your first visit, we will also discuss flea, tick, and heartworm prevention options.



HOME ENVIRONMENT, PLAY, & ENRICHMENT

Cats and especially kittens are very active, curious, intelligent, and playful creatures. For them to live a fulfilling life, it is best to provide plenty of mental and physical stimulation that helps engage their natural instincts.

Cat towers, cat trees, or furniture that allow them to climb, explore, and practice cat parkour on.

Toys that encourage and mimic hunting such as laser pointers, wand toys, or small mouse/prey-like toys that they can chase after and catch. When using laser pointers for play, it is important to end the play by pointing the laser on a physical toy so the cat can “catch” it. Not allowing your cat to “catch” a physical cat toy at the end of laser play may cause them to be frustrated, which is not the goal of play.



Cat beds (open and closed), window perches, or soft blankets that allow for napping, me time, sunbathing, and grooming.

Scratching posts for cats to sharpen their claws, stretch their legs, and scent mark their area. It is recommended to have a variety of posts. Some cats like different substrates (cardboard, carpet, sisal rope) in a variety of shapes and locations.

Water fountains provide enrichment and encourage drinking. Some cats like variation in their water bowls, and a fountain is often a popular choice.

Feeding stations are best placed away from litter boxes. Water bowls/stations are also recommended to be in different locations than feeding.

Litter Boxes so your cat can have their own specific place to urinate and defecate. The texture and feeling of litter mimics the ground, and kittens instantly know to dig, do their business, and then cover up. It is best to place these boxes in a calm area of your house where your kitten can easily find them but go to the bathroom in peace. Best practice is to scoop clean your kitten’s litter box daily; they prefer their bathroom to be clean (who doesn't?). It is recommended to do a deep clean of the litter box every 2-3 weeks by emptying the box completely and washing with unscented soap. Scooping their box daily will also help you identify any thing out of the ordinary, like diarrhea. It is recommended to use unscented litter and not use a plastic liner in the box.

When inviting a kitten or cat into your home, you should consider the following when preparing to share your space with them. Keep in mind, cats are nocturnal animals, and your kitten may be very active and playful in the middle of the night.



SOCIALIZING YOUNG KITTENS

The key socialization period for kittens is 2-7 weeks of age. Past this age, it is difficult to socialize a kitten that has yet to be socialized.

Cats and kittens are territorial creatures, meaning they find comfort and stability in familiar surroundings that they identify as their home. When first being adopted or coming to a new home, a kitten will not yet have an established comfort or sense of home. They may be skittish, fearful, or even hide. 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. It is important that exposure to new things be fun and positive.

Some ideas are:

- Have visitors in your home.
- Take your kitten to a friend's or relative's house for a visit.
- Try to have your kitten meet at least one new person a day during the first 14 weeks.
- Have them see children playing from a distance.
- Introduce your kitten to a variety of sounds in a controlled manner/environment.
- Go for a ride in the car within a secured carrier.
- Have them see or meet an adult dog who is healthy, friendly, and known to be relaxed around cats.
- Teach your kitten to love their travel carrier.
- Touch your kitten on various parts of their body (especially paws) to get them used to being held and touched. Giving them a treat or reward each time you do this can help train them.



Some shy or fearful kittens learn to trust people immediately, while others take longer. It is best to be patient, invest time, and go slow so you do not push them beyond their comfort zone.

Keep your kitten in a smaller room where there are not many places to hide or escape. A larger environment can be overwhelming and make a kitten who wants to hide hard to find. Keep a litter box that is easy for them to find. Provide a place to snuggle and hide, such as a cat bed or house, and toys. Spend time in this smaller room so your kitten can get more accustomed to you. Talk to them in a quiet, calm voice. When it is mealtime, place their food bowl near you and let them approach you. It may take several days but let your kitten approach you and smell you on their own time. If they are comfortable eating close to you, try to pet them as they eat. You can offer food or treats from your hands as well as trying to initiate play with toys. They are learning that you are not threatening and associating you with positive things in their environment. Make no sudden movements and never grab or chase your kitten.

HOW TO SOCIALIZE A KITTEN WITH OTHER CATS

The slower and more gradual introductions are, the more chance you have for success. As mentioned, cats are highly territorial. If you already have one, chances are they believe your home belongs to them. A new kitten can feel like a threat to that ownership, so it's vital to make introductions slowly. It is best to keep a new kitten separated for several days while both parties can start to get accustomed to their new housing arrangements.

Give each cat an item with the other animal's scent, such as a blanket. Once your cats get used to each other's scents, you can allow them to interact face-to-face, but keep a watchful eye to ensure they're getting along okay.

*Note: Before introducing a new kitten to other pets in the household, call your vet to ensure all existing animals are up-to-date on their vaccinations and in good health.



INTRODUCING KITTENS AND DOGS

Keep your kitten in a separate small room. Introduce their scents by first rubbing each animal with a sock and then taking that sock and allowing the other animal to smell it. This is an olfactory introduction to each other. Let each animal explore the other animal's territory while they are not there. Closely supervise face to face meetings. Have your dog on a leash so you can control and redirect them if needed. The cat should have an escape route that allows them to go up, under, or inside where they have privacy from the dog. This is ideally an area that the dog is not allowed or able to get into (a cat tree, or room with a baby gate).



TEETHING/BITING

Why Do Kittens Bite?

Biting and mouthing are normal behaviors in young, developing kittens. Biting and mouthing may occur during times when adult teeth are replacing baby teeth (a developmental process known as teething) and can be part of how they learn and gather information about food, toys, and their surroundings. Regardless of why a youngster bites, biting should never be encouraged because it can lead to continued biting into adulthood, and adult cats that bite can inflict serious damage and/or result in a poorer quality of life for themselves and their owners.

How to Manage Biting

There are many training methods to help with biting. Remember that this is a learning process for everyone, and that some suggestions will not be as effective as others depending on the reason for biting, such as play biting vs fear/avoidance. It is important not to use punishment to train, especially for normal behavior. This can prevent a kitten from learning normal skills, like play biting to hone hunting skills, and can affect the bond between you and your pet. The best solution is to stay consistent with your training methods and be patient.



Use management tools that encourage better actions and provide good outlets to meet the needs of both you and your young pet. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Redirecting biting onto appropriate toys.
- Using a command word—such as “sit”—to distract from biting then give a reward only if the biting stops.
- Avoiding rough play with humans.
- Using "time outs"—i.e. removing yourself or your pet from the situation and having no contact for a set amount of time—to de-escalate the behaviors can allow them to calm down.
- Providing plenty of toys and other distractions.

Veterinarians can be a valuable tool when attempts to minimize biting are unsuccessful. Discuss your concerns with your veterinarian who may refer you to a veterinary behaviorist for more help.

More information found at:

- <https://catfriendly.com/>
- <https://icatcare.org/>
- <https://veterinarypartner.vin.com/default.aspx?pid=19239&id=8978091>
- <https://www.fearfreehappyhomes.com/kit/cats-101/>

DIET

Choosing a pet's food can be an overwhelming process due to the number of diets on the market. Kittens should be fed kitten-formulated food initially. Outlined below are our general guidelines:

1. The pet food should be certified by AAFCO to be "complete and balanced" using either (1) an AAFCO Nutrient Profile or (2) AAFCO Feeding Trial. AAFCO stands for the Association of American Feed Control Officials.

* <https://veterinarypartner.vin.com/default.aspx?pid=19239&catId=102898&id=8808771&ind=319&objTypeID=1007>

2. We do not recommend raw food and home-cooked diets as these diets can spread food-borne pathogens to you and your pets, and they are nutritionally incomplete. Please see the website listed below for more information.

* [Homecooked/Raw Diets](#)

3. Brands commonly recommended by veterinarians include Hill's, Royal Canin, and Purina ProPlan. These companies are established, employ board-certified nutritionists, and conduct safety testing on their products. This list is by no means exhaustive; it is simply a place to start.

* A helpful website: <https://www.petnutritionalliance.org/>

SPAY & NEUTER

We recommend that every cat be spayed/neutered to prevent unplanned litters and reproductive disease. The recommended age to perform this surgery is 5 months of age. Once most kittens are 5-6 months of age, they reach sexual maturity and can reproduce. Spaying a female cat before she goes into heat can dramatically reduce her chance of developing mammary cancer.

General Spay/Neuter Guidelines:

- We recommend kittens be spayed or neutered at 5 months of age.
- Some cats can come into heat as early as 4 months of age. Spaying prior to the first heat cycle reduces the risk of mammary cancer.
- Neutering at five months, prior to puberty, is known to reduce behaviors such as aggression, roaming, and urine marking.
- Spaying and neutering at 5 months eliminates the possibility of unwanted litters.



DENTAL CARE

Just like us, dental health is very important for cats. At-home care includes: brushing their teeth, dental treats/chews, prescription diets, and water additives. Even with diligent at-home care, cats require professional dental cleanings by veterinarians to prevent severe periodontal disease. These professional cleanings are performed under general anesthesia and may require diseased teeth to be removed to stop infection.



How to Brush Your Pet's Teeth:

Brushing your pet's teeth is an important part of keeping his or her mouth clean and healthy. Most pets do not like having their teeth brushed at first, but by introducing toothbrushing gradually and keeping it positive, your pet can learn to enjoy it.

Keep the sessions short, do not overly restrain your pet, and always end on a positive note with praise or play.

The first step is to get your pet used to you putting things in his mouth. Dip your finger in a liquid they might like, such as chicken broth, and let him lick it off. After a few sessions, begin rubbing your finger gently over their gums and teeth.

Once your pet enjoys this, introduce the toothpaste in the same way. Never use human toothpaste as this can cause gastrointestinal problems in pets.

When your pet is used to the toothpaste, introduce the cleaning item you are going to use, like a toothbrush or fingerbrush. Let them lick the toothpaste off of the cleaning item for a few sessions to get used to it.

Gradually introduce brushing, starting with the large canine teeth in the front of the mouth. These are the easiest to get to and are good to practice on. Once your pet accepts this, you can gradually increase the number of teeth you are brushing.

This process takes patience—for some pets it may take days, and for some, it may take weeks or more—but most pets can learn to accept toothbrushing. For those who can not, there are special foods available which can create a "brushing" action, oral rinses (ask us about these), and dental chews .

- [More information on dental health](#)
- [Products that have undergone testing and have been shown to decrease plaque and tartar buildup](#)



PET INSURANCE & BUDGETING

The below websites have more information on pet insurance. Unlike human medical insurance, most pet insurance plans provide coverage only for accident, illness, and emergency care. Some plans do cover wellness visits, routine dental cleanings, and vaccines. We strongly encourage you to do your research and compare monthly premiums, co-pays/deductibles, coverages, and exclusions. It's important to determine what type of coverage you anticipate will work best for you and your pet..

As an alternative to pet insurance, some owners elect to budget and routinely set aside money so they have reserves for when their furry family member falls ill.

- [Pet Insurance Fact Sheet](#)
- [Pet Insurance – Learn the basics and compare quotes](#)



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