

# FELINE COMPANION HEALTH



**AMC**

SINCE 1910

ANIMAL MEDICAL CENTER

The Elmer and Mamdouha Bobst Hospital | Caspary Research Institute | The Institute for Postgraduate Education  
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COMMUNITY PRACTICE

# PARTNER WITH A VETERINARIAN

Regular veterinary visits should begin as soon as you acquire your new cat. Although kittens get some immunity from their mothers, this immunity begins to decrease soon after they are weaned. Kittens should be vaccinated against feline diseases and checked periodically for worms and other parasites. Your adult cat should also receive regular vaccinations on a timetable determined by your veterinarian. Cats of all ages should have an annual medical examination.

## THE ROUTINE EXAM

During your visit, the veterinarian will check the condition of your cat's eyes and ears, listen to the sounds of their heart and breathing, feel their abdomen and coat, and perform a thorough oral examination.

The veterinarian may require tests such as examination of a stool sample for internal parasites and blood tests to screen for disease. Regular tests and vaccinations are especially important during a kitten's first year.

## VACCINATIONS

All cats, even those kept indoors, need to be vaccinated. Your veterinarian will provide routine vaccinations for feline distemper and upper respiratory disease. Ask your veterinarian if your cat should be vaccinated against feline leukemia virus. Remember, some vaccines must be given as a series over a period of time, and many may require boosters. Your cat's initial rabies vaccination is essential and should be given between three and four months of age, depending on the vaccine.

Through various tests and vaccines, modern veterinary medicine can provide a degree of protection from many feline diseases.



Cover photo courtesy of Corey Towers | hoofphoto.com

# FELINE VACCINATION PROGRAM

Regular physical examinations and vaccinations can help your kitten live a healthy, happy life. You can help protect your kitten from the following common infectious diseases by following your veterinarian's recommended immunization schedule.

Veterinarian's Name:

Phone Number:

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Pet's Name:

Birth Date:

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**PANLEUKOPENIA:** Also called distemper, this highly contagious viral disease can be spread through air, contact with infected animals or even contact with places infected animals have been. Symptoms can be any or all of the following: weight loss, severe depression, dehydration, loss of appetite, an intense desire for water, vomiting, and diarrhea.

**HERPESVIRUS & CALICIVIRUS:**

Highly contagious viral infections displaying cold or flu-like symptoms. Signs include sneezing, depression, discharge from eyes and ears, fever, and ulcers in the mouth.

**RABIES:** A fatal viral infection of the central nervous system that affects mammals, including humans. Though it is usually transmitted through the bite of an infected animal, it can be spread when the saliva of the rabid animal comes in contact with broken skin. Rabies vaccinations are required in most states.

**FELINE LEUKEMIA (FeLV):** One of the leading causes of feline death, this virus causes a variety of problems including immunosuppression, chronic anemia, leukemia, and solid tumors. FeLV can be spread through contact with infected blood or saliva.

# FEEDING YOUR NEW CAT

## WHY DOG AND CAT FOODS ARE NOT INTERCHANGEABLE:

- Vitamin A must be supplied in cat food, whereas dogs can make do with beta carotene instead (their bodies can turn it into vitamin A). While some dog foods may contain additional vitamin A, many won't have the amount a cat requires for a lifetime of optimum health.
- Taurine is a component of protein in an amino acid that all cats require, while dogs have the ability to "make" their own. Because dog foods can be deficient in taurine, feeding your cat dog food can result in a devastating type of heart disease called hypertrophic cardiomyopathy. This also happens when cats eat a fish-only diet, since fish meat is also deficient in this amino acid. A balanced diet for all pets is best.
- Arachidonic acid is a fatty acid that is necessary to produce an inflammatory response, and is manufactured naturally in dogs. Cats, however, need this fatty acid as a supplement that is found in commercial cat food. While in many cases, such as in allergies, the goal is to suppress an inflammatory response, in other cases, the response is a necessary means by which the body can protect itself. This fatty acid also helps to regulate skin growth, is necessary for proper blood clotting, and is required for the reproductive and gastrointestinal systems to function properly.
- Protein levels are another big reason not to feed cats dog food. Cats retain many of the same traits and nutritional needs of lions, tigers and other members of their extended family. Therefore, cats require significantly more protein than omnivores, such as dogs. Unlike an omnivore, a cat's body is specifically made for consuming more protein than carbohydrates, a trademark of a carnivore. Certain digestive track enzymes that are common in omnivores, for example, are absent in cats. Therefore, adequate protein levels are especially important for growing kittens and adult cats that are nursing.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF MANAGING YOUR PET'S WEIGHT

According to researchers at the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention, an estimated 58% of cats and 54% of dogs in the United States are overweight or obese. Animals gain fat around their internal organs before they begin to show signs of excess weight on the outside. By the time you see the extra weight, your pet's health may already be in danger. Talk to your veterinarian about choosing the right diet for your pet and get into the habit of tracking/measuring your pet's food intake from the start. The primary risks of excess weight in pets are:

- Cranial cruciate ligament injury
- Decreased life expectancy (up to 2.5 years)
- Heart and respiratory disease
- High blood pressure
- Insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes
- Kidney disease
- Many forms of cancer
- Osteoarthritis

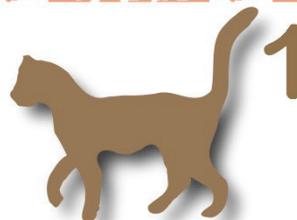
# DAILY CALORIC NEEDS FOR AVERAGE INDOOR CATS

Daily Caloric Needs for Average Indoor Cats	
Size	
10 lbs.	180 to 200 calories*
Daily Caloric Needs for Active Humans	
Male	2500 calories
Female	2000 calories
* Please note that the calorie counts provided are guidelines for average, lightly active adult spayed or neutered cats (1 to 7 years old receiving less than 30 minutes aerobic activity per day). The caloric needs of a particular pet may differ depending on such factors as lifestyle, genetics, activity level and medical conditions. Your pet will likely be fed fewer calories if you are attempting to reduce weight and improve fitness. Note that most indoor cats receive very little sustained aerobic activity. We recommend a structured routine exercise and nutritional program for both you and your pet.	

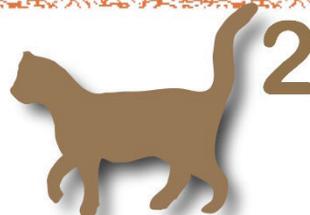


## Body Condition Scoring

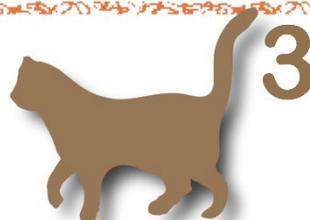
Ribs, spine and bony protrusions are easily seen at a distance. These pets have lost muscle mass and there is no observable body fat. Emaciated, bony, and starved in appearance.



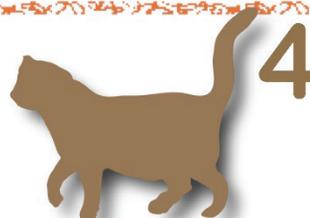
Ribs, spine and other bones are easily felt. These pets have an obvious waist when viewed from above and have an abdominal tuck. Thin, lean or skinny in appearance.



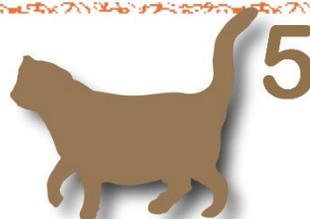
Ribs and spine are easily felt but not necessarily seen. There is a waist when viewed from above and the abdomen is raised and not sagging when viewed from the side. Normal, ideal and often muscular in appearance.



Ribs and spine are hard to feel or count underneath fat deposits. Waist is distended or often pear-shaped when viewed from above. The abdomen sags when seen from the side. There are typically fat deposits on the hips, base of tail and chest. Overweight, heavy, husky or stout.



Large fat deposits over the chest, back, tail base and hindquarters. The abdomen sags prominently and there is no waist when viewed from above. The chest and abdomen often appear distended or swollen. Obese.



# PET TREAT COMPARISON CHART



## Dog Treat Translator

A cookie or a piece of cheese may seem like a little treat, but it's like a whole meal for dogs.

**Too many unhealthy snacks can add up fast!**

**Snacks & Scraps**  
(as fed to a 20 lb dog)

**Human Caloric Equivalent**  
(average size woman)



Just one little cookie =



1 oz piece of cheddar cheese =



One hot dog  
(If used as training treats,  
cut into tiny pieces) =



## Cat Treat Translator

A cup of milk or a piece of cheese may seem like a little treat, but it's like a whole meal for cats.

**Too many unhealthy snacks can add up fast!**

**Snacks & Scraps**  
(as fed to a 10 lb cat)

**Human Caloric Equivalent**  
(average size woman)



Just one potato chip =



1 oz piece of cheddar cheese =



One cup whole milk  
(causes weight gain and upset tummy!) =



# SPAYING & NEUTERING

Spaying and neutering (the sterilization of female and male cats) is a responsible way to prevent the birth of unwanted litters. It also helps to avoid undesirable behaviors, and can reduce or eliminate the risk of several diseases. Many shelters and humane societies require this procedure before a cat can be adopted.

## NEUTERING

Neutering is the surgical removal of the male cat's testicles.

- If not neutered, your male cat may exhibit an uncontrollable urge to roam by the time he turns one year old.
- As he grows older, he may develop the habit of spraying walls and furniture with streams of urine as a way of claiming territory. Once sprayed, furniture may be impossible to deodorize.
- Ideally, a male kitten should be neutered around six months, before he acquires the spraying habit. However, neutering an older cat is definitely worthwhile, since it should weaken, if not eliminate, those unpleasant behaviors.

## SPAYING

Spaying is the surgical removal of the female cat's uterus and ovaries.

- After spaying, she will not experience heat cycles or become pregnant.
- Most veterinarians feel that five to six months of age, before your cat has her first heat, is the ideal time for spaying.
- When a cat is in heat, she becomes restless, nervous and tense. She may roll on the floor frequently and appear more demanding. Her voice may also become more piercing and she may attempt to get outdoors to find a mate.

## ONCE YOUR CAT HAS BEEN SPAYED:

- She will likely be more relaxed, playful and affectionate.
- She may become less nervous and noisy.
- Spaying a female cat also helps reduce the risk of breast cancer, pyometra (a life-threatening uterine infection), tumors of the reproductive system, and conditions related to hormonal imbalances.

# GUARDING YOUR CAT AGAINST PARASITES

## PARASITES

Parasites are organisms that can live in or on another living thing. Parasite checks must be conducted early and often, since mother cats can transmit parasites to their kittens.

As with most health problems, prevention of parasites is easier, less expensive and less bothersome than treatment, so be alert for early signs.

## INTERNAL PARASITES

Internal parasites usually live in a cat's digestive system; an examination of your cat's stool can detect them. Treatment can begin as early as six weeks of age and be repeated at two- to three-week intervals as determined by your veterinarian. The veterinarian also will do one or more fecal parasite checks within this period. Common internal parasites in cats include the following:

- Coccidia
- Hookworms
- Roundworms
- Tapeworms

**TOXOPLASMOSIS** is a serious disease caused by a parasite that is dangerous to humans as well. Since toxoplasmosis can cause severe birth defects in humans, pregnant women should not change a cat's litter box.

## EXTERNAL PARASITES

External parasites live on your cat's body. These are diagnosed by physical examination and by tests run on your cat's skin. Parasites can make life miserable for you and your cat; however, there is much you can do to prevent and treat them. Remember that because cats lick themselves as part of normal grooming, certain combinations of over-the-counter products can be harmful. Always ask your veterinarian about the best way to combat external parasites. Common external parasites in cats include the following:

- Ear mites
- Fleas
- Giardia
- Lice
- Mange mites
- Ticks

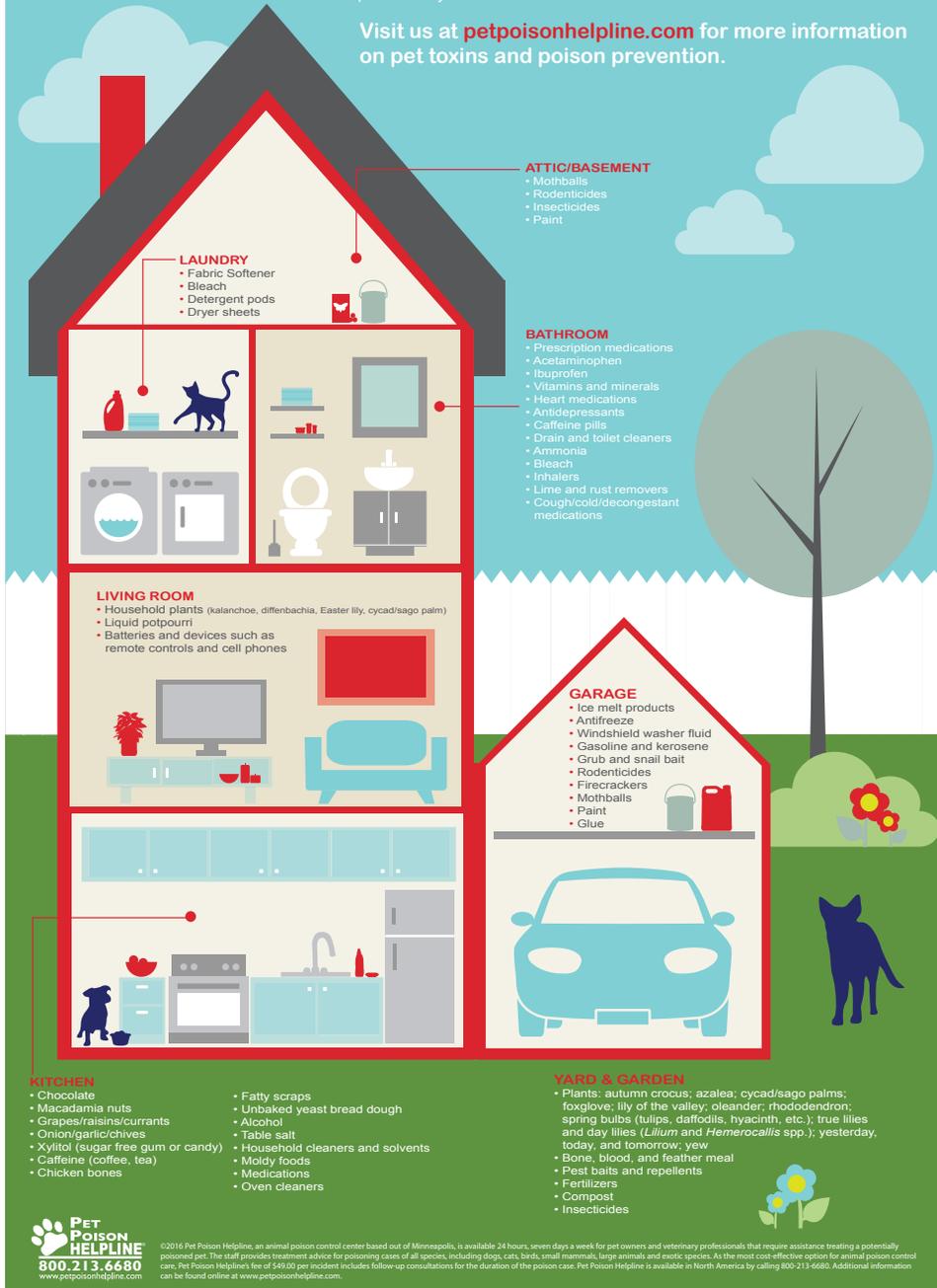
# COMMON HOUSEHOLD PET POISONS



## SPOT THE PET POISONS IN YOUR HOME

Pet-proofing your home is one of the first steps in keeping your pets happy and healthy. There are common household and yard items that can harm your pet if swallowed and each year, many dogs and cats suffer from accidental ingestion of these substances. Follow this guide to spot the pet poisons in your home.

Visit us at [petpoisonhelpline.com](http://petpoisonhelpline.com) for more information on pet toxins and poison prevention.



©2016 Pet Poison Helpline, an animal poison control center based out of Minneapolis, is available 24 hours, seven days a week for pet owners and veterinary professionals that require assistance treating a potentially poisoned pet. The staff provides treatment advice for poisoning cases of all species, including dogs, cats, birds, small mammals, large animals and exotic species. As the most cost-effective option for animal poison control care, Pet Poison Helpline's fee of \$49.00 per incident includes follow-up consultations for the duration of the poison case. Pet Poison Helpline is available in North America by calling 800-213-6680. Additional information can be found online at [www.petpoisonhelpline.com](http://www.petpoisonhelpline.com).

# TIPS ON AVOIDING INGESTION EMERGENCIES

Swallowed objects can be dangerous to pets, often requiring x-rays, testing and surgery. Avoid hazardous situations by familiarizing yourself with common household/kitchen items that are toxic to your pet, maintaining a tidy living space and pet-proofing your home.

## PET-PROOFING YOUR HOME

Pet-proofing your home is one of the first steps in keeping your pets happy and healthy. There are common household and yard items that can harm your pet if swallowed and each year, many dogs and cats suffer from accidental ingestion of these substances.

Be on the lookout for the following:

- Cabinets and drawers that are easily opened in the kitchen and bathroom
- Garbage cans and laundry hampers without lids
- Decorative items that can be knocked over
- Loose cords and wires, including curtain and blind cords

## SIGNS THAT YOUR PET MAY HAVE INGESTED A FOREIGN OBJECT

- Refusal to eat
- Repeated vomiting
- Dry heaving or coughing
- Difficulty breathing or swallowing

### TOP 10 CAT TOXINS

- Topical spot-on insecticides
- Household cleaners
- Antidepressants
- Lilies
- Insoluble oxalate plants (e.g., Dieffenbachia, Philodendron, etc.)
- NSAIDs
- Cold and flu medication
- Glow sticks
- ADD/ADHD medications/ amphetamines
- Mouse and rat poisons

### TOP 10 HUMAN MEDS TOXIC TO CATS

- NSAIDs
- Acetaminophen
- Antidepressants
- ADD/ADHD medications
- Benzodiazepines and sleep aids
- Birth control
- Ace inhibitors
- Beta-blockers
- Thyroid hormones
- Cholesterol lowering agents

FOR AN A-Z LIST OF PET TOXINS AND OTHER RESOURCES, PLEASE VISIT:  
[petpoisonhelpline.com](http://petpoisonhelpline.com)

# MEDICATION SAFETY

## KEEP THE FAMILY PETS SAFE FROM MEDICATIONS BY FOLLOWING THESE SIMPLE STEPS:

1. Childproof does not mean pet proof: Despite the fact that you cannot pry a prescription bottle open with your own two hands, between their teeth and nails, your pet will be able to open a bottle in only a few seconds. Don't count on the safety lid to protect your pet; keep medications stored in a pet proof area.
2. Pet proof storage: Your dresser, the nightstand, and the bathroom counter are not pet proof areas. If you have a curious pet, be sure medications are kept in a cabinet with a tight latch. Try the childproofing aisle in your local hardware store for ideas on how to prevent unauthorized cabinet entry by your pets.
3. Don't shake, rattle or roll: Shaking a pill bottle to get your pet's attention or giving your pet a treat after they come for the rattle of pills in the container will make your pet very interested in the pill bottles themselves. Promote safe behavior and clicker train your pet.
4. Team approach to toxicity: If you have more than one pet, keep in mind that they may take a team approach when getting into the medication stash. For example, the pill bottles on your dresser are quickly knocked down by your agile cat and can find their way into the jaws of your clever dog. Once the bottle is open, everyone can help themselves to the surprise inside.
5. Travel inspection: We all love to take our pets everywhere we go, but friends and family may not have their homes pet proofed. Scout out counters, nightstands and dressers for dangerous bottles of medication. Confine your dog in his crate or stroller if the home is filled with dangerous medications.
6. Keep important phone numbers handy:
  - Animal Medical Center Emergency Room, 212-838-8100
  - Pet Poison Helpline, 800-213-6680 (fee applies)
  - ASPCA Animal Poison Control, 888-426-4435 (fee applies)

# SIGNS OF ILLNESS

Even with good care, your cat may not always be in the best of health. She may have a flurry of sneezes or a coughing spell. She may vomit occasionally, even if she is not seriously ill. But if these signs persist, don't ignore them. Take her to the veterinarian right away. A change in behavior is often the first sign of illness. Other signs that indicate your cat may need veterinary attention include the following:

- Diarrhea that persists for more than 24 hours or accompanies other signs of illness
- Constipation that persists for more than 24 hours
- Persistent vomiting or vomiting of greenish-yellow bile; or vomiting blood that colors the vomit dark red, brown or black
- Labored breathing or panting
- Straining to urinate or blood in the urine
- Acute swelling or small body lumps that gradually increase in size
- Lameness or pain
- Loss of appetite for more than 24 hours
- Sudden weight loss or weight gain
- A dull, patchy coat that sheds heavily
- Red, watery eyes or nasal discharge
- Lying or crouching listlessly
- Failure to groom
- Not using the litter box, or using an inappropriate location
- Hiding in dark places
- Resents or resists handling
- Scratching or biting by a normally even-tempered cat
- Anything that is unusual for your cat

# FELINE HEALTH RECORD

AGE	DATE DUE	DATE GIVEN	WEIGHT				FECAL EXAM	HEARTWORM EXAM
							+/-	+/-
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1 Year								
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