Congratulations On Your New Kitten

Cats are extremely clean pets that require little care and provide excellent companionship. However, cats require that their love and loyalty be earned. Please read the following information carefully. Following these recommendations will help to insure that your kitten lives a long and healthy life.

Supplies that you need for your new kitten are high quality food, bowls for water and food, a litter pan with litter and scoop, kitten shampoo, grooming tools, a pet carrier, and toys.

Diet

Unfortunately there are many different types and quality of cat food available. Much of it is equivalent to “junk food”. We recommend feeding your cat a high quality cat food. Premium brands are the Science Diet, Royan Canin, Eukanuba and Purina Veterinary Diets, just to name a few. The level of quality then drops to the intermediate pet store brands, brand name foods from the grocery store, and lastly, cheap foods. With pet food, you often “get what you pay for”. Labeling can be very deceptive. The best way to compare food is to compare price to amount. If the food is much cheaper than the quality brands, it may be because they switch ingredients frequently, have a lower quality of ingredients, and/or may not perform any food trials. At our hospital we sell Hills and Purina Veterinary Diets, not only because these are premium diets, but also because they have extra ingredients such as fatty acids (Omega 3 & 6) in the diet to help with the hair coat. Our Doctors feel that this is very important because of all the skin problems and allergies we see in this area. These two diets also have specialized formulas to meet specific health issues.

One misconception is that the premium diets are too expensive to feed. The cost of feeding a premium diet compared to a cheap diet is very similar. With cheap foods, the pet actually has to eat a larger amount to get the same nutrition available in the more expensive foods. The better quality diets help with muscle and skeletal formation, hair coat quality, and internal growth.
Feeding
We recommend that kittens be fed set meals 2-3 times daily. When they are adults, we recommend feeding twice daily—it is better for their digestive system. One reason why we recommend feeding set meals as opposed to leaving the food down all day is because if the kitten is sick and not eating well, it will be noticed a lot sooner than if the food is left down all day. As adults, you can usually leave the food down all day if set meals don’t work.

With cats, it is recommended that you feed 60-70% of the diet as dry food and supplement the rest with can food. Cats are not big water drinkers and adding canned food can help to prevent urinary tract problems. Feeding tip: You may not want to get your cat accustomed to can food early in the morning. Otherwise your cat may be demanding canned food EARLY on weekends when you may try to sleep in!

People Food
Diet should be less than 5% people food. Cats are used to a very bland diet. Definite No-Nos are:

a. **Real Bones** – not even the beef ones. There is a possibility that any bone could splinter and perforate intestines, or even cause impaction (blockage of intestine); leading to surgery, hospitalization, or even death. Some people may get away with feeding their cats bones for years. We liken this to “Russian Roulette”.

b. **Food High In Fat** – like chicken skins or steak trimmings. Fat will upset the pancreas, potentially causing needed hospitalization or even death. Once the pancreas has had a problem, it will usually have future episodes.

c. **Spicy Foods** – same potential for pancreatitis.

d. **Definitely No Barbecue**

e. **Pork Products** – have been known to cause projectile vomiting.

f. **Chocolate** – can cause gastrointestinal upset, cardiac problems and even death.

g. **Garlic and Onions** – can cause problems with red blood cells.

In summary, ‘if it is flavorful to us, don’t give it to your cat’. Fresh vegetables, yogurt, air-popped popcorn, and crackers are OK (in moderation) and we let our cats lick the milk out of the empty cereal bowls. As long as it doesn’t cause diarrhea, a small amount of milk is OK.
It is not a particular food type so much as the fact that people tend to give their pets too much food and not in the correct portion for their pet's size.

Adding Vitamins or Fats

If your pet is on a good, high quality diet, then you do not need to supplement his food. Adding different supplements only serve to unbalance the diet. Your pet also does not need to have an egg or bacon grease added to his food. People do this to add fatty acids for a better hair coat. Unfortunately, when doing this, “bad” fats are also being added. The premium diets have the fatty acids already added to them. Fatty acids are available as a supplement, but it is best to have them already in the diet.

Heartworm Prevention

Cats, indoor and outdoor, can get heartworms from mosquitoes. It is estimated that about 20% of cats are infected with heartworms compared to 60% of dogs. Many cats diagnosed with asthma have had previous heartworm infections. One common clinical sign of heartworm disease is for the cat to appear healthy, only to have sudden death. We strongly recommend heartworm prevention for all cats. Heartworm preventatives for cats come in both a chewable tablet (Heartgard, Interceptor, Sentinel) and a topical solution (Revolution).

While the chewable products are good, here at Claws & Paws we recommend that your cat be put on Revolution. This topical heartworm prevention also treats for/prevents round worms, hookworms, ear mites and fleas.

Your cat will need monthly heartworm preventative on the same day each month for the rest of his life. The heartworm preventative is not like the vaccines where it confers long-term protection. It works only as long as you continue to give it.

Intestinal Parasites

It is very common for up to 70% of kittens to have intestinal worms. Some of these worms can be very dangerous, potentially causing a pet’s death. These worms can potentially be transmitted to people, especially children. The fecal material should be examined for parasites the first time that your kitten comes in, and again on the last
booster visit. Do not just depend on the presence of diarrhea to indicate that there is a problem. We recommend that adult cats be tested for intestinal parasites on an annual basis.

**Wellness Diagnostic Testing**

We recommend annual diagnostic blood work and urinalysis beginning at age one in order to obtain baseline values which can be used for comparison each year of your pet's life. Wellness diagnostic screenings maximize your ability to discover (and our ability to effectively treat) most health issues before they can become serious health problems. As your pet reaches his senior years (around age eight, depending on breed), these screenings become even more important.

**Housetraining**

Show your kitten the litter box and place him/her in it several times. It is rare for a kitten to reject or not use the litter box because its mother has usually already trained him/her to use the litter box. If this does happen, move the litter box to a more secluded area. If the problem continues, you may need to place several boxes around the house to determine a favorite location and also try different types of litter. Once you find a litter that the kitten likes, always use that type. We do not recommend switching brands or types of litter because this may cause your cat to stop using the litter box altogether. You also will need to clean the litter box frequently. Cats are very clean animals and may refuse to use a dirty litter box. If you have multiple pets, we recommend one litter box per cat plus one. If you have two cats, it means you should have three litter boxes.

If your kitten stops using the litter box suddenly, after he has been using it regularly, this may indicate that he has a urinary infection or other problem and should be examined by your veterinarian. Male cats often get a medical condition where the urethra becomes blocked with crystals and they cannot urinate. This is an emergency and your cat needs to be seen by a Doctor right away. Cats that are blocked will get in the litter box frequently, yet not have voided any urine. Eventually they will stop eating and drinking and become lethargic. Their abdomen may be tender because their bladder is full, which can ultimately lead to death if left untreated.
Vaccinations

Many pet owners have questions as to why their kitten needs more than one vaccine and when. Your kitten is just like a baby with an immune system that is still growing and is not up to par yet. Each vaccine helps to stimulate the immune system, which can only respond so much. Your kitten may be fully protected after one vaccine, or he may not even be fully protected after three vaccines.

The timing of the vaccines is important. Peak immune response is at 3-4 weeks post-vaccination (this is why we space our vaccinations 3-4 weeks apart). Another vaccine at this time builds upon the previous immune system response resulting in stronger immunity. Wait longer to vaccinate and the response will not be as great. That is why the timing of vaccines is so important. Also, it is not the number of vaccines that your kitten gets, but the timing of them. This has to do with interference by maternal antibodies. It is recommended to carry out vaccines through 16-20 weeks of age. After your kitten has been through his kitten series, he will then receive booster vaccines in 12 months, and then annually and triennially after that, depending upon the type of vaccine given.

Vaccine Reaction

There is a less than .05% chance that your kitten may have an allergic reaction to something in the vaccines. When cats have vaccine reactions, it is considered an emergency. Cats can have an anaphylactic response, usually with 5-15 minutes of vaccination. Signs that you may see include excessive drooling, vomiting, diarrhea, or walking drunkenly (off balance). Should you see any of these signs consider it an emergency and seek immediate medical attention. Another type of reaction is a delayed one where your cat will be lethargic for 1-2 days after vaccination. If either of these reactions happen, your kitten/cat may receive an injection to prevent such a reaction next time. Or, we may elect to discontinue that particular vaccine.

One potential consequence of vaccination in cats involves the growth of a “Vaccine Associated Sarcoma” (tumor). Because of the secrecy with vaccine formulations,
no one knows what specific ingredient is responsible for this tumor. It has been suspected that the adjuvant is involved. Because of this, our hospital uses non-adjuvanted vaccines to increase safety. Please do not hesitate to vaccinate your cat because of this. It is estimated to occur in only 4 in 10,000 cats that are vaccinated. Researchers now suspect that a genetic component is involved in this type of tumor.

As a kitten, your pet will be receiving different vaccinations on the booster visits. It is important to observe your cat for reactions each time a different vaccine is given. Once a kitten reacts to vaccines, an antihistamine and/or anti-inflammatory injection is given with all future vaccinations to prevent the reaction from occurring.

**Bathing**

You can bathe your kitten once weekly, but less often is better because of cats’ grooming habits. Bathing more often will remove needed oils and harm the skin, making it more susceptible to infection. The shampoo loves to stay on hair, so make sure that you double- and triple-rinse more than you think you need to. Soap that stays on the skin will cause flaking and itching. Make sure that the shampoo you use says “Okay for use on Kittens”. We also have a line of kitten-safe shampoos here at Claws & Paws.

Recommendations for acclimating your kitten to bathing: Fill the kitchen sink with 1-2 inches of warm water. Gently lower the kitten into the sink to where all of his feet are wet. Do nothing else until he becomes used to this and is not stressed. Then cup your hand in the water and slowly pour it over his back. Do not start with his face. Once he is fully drenched, you may then begin applying the shampoo. If you have a double sink, try to have the water running on low volume in the next sink. Fill up a glass with the clean water and use this to rinse off the kitten. You may want to make sure that your kitten is used to the noise of the faucet before applying the shampoo! For this process to be successful, it is very important that you take it very slowly so that the kitten does not get stressed and have any bad experiences.
Socialization

Your kitten will do a lot better if he is socialized at an early age to other dogs, cats, children, and people. However, remember that he is only to be around adult cats (not kittens) who are current on vaccinations until he is fully vaccinated.

Household Dangers

Kittens are very curious and use their mouth to explore the world. Kitten-proofing your home is key to keeping your new kitten happy and healthy. Keep electrical cords, house plants and household chemicals out of your kitten’s reach.

Common Household Hazards

- Human Medications (includes OTC)
- Vitamins
- Tobacco
- Detergents and Fabric Softener
- Disinfectants and Cleaners
- Bleach
- Paint Thinner
- Lighter Fluid
- Insecticides
- Mothballs
- Potpourri
- Easter Lily
- Sago Palm
- Antifreeze
- Tinsel (at Christmas time)

For a more comprehensive list of toxic plants, food, and other items please visit CPVH.com.

Spay/Neuter

If you are not planning on breeding your pet, the best time to spay/neuter your cat is at 5-6 months of age. This is recommended for a number of reasons. There is a high correlation between the incidence of breast cancer and the number of heat cycles your cat goes through. It is better that your pet be spayed before her first heat cycle.

Intact females will try harder to go outside, thus exposing them to potential dangers such as people, cars, and other animals.

Intact male cats will start to mark their territory by spraying inside the house. They also will try to get outside more and try to fight with other cats, increasing their risk for disease, along with the potential dangers of being outdoors.
Miscellaneous

You need to “kitten-proof” your home before letting your cat loose. Be sure that all doors and windows are closed to prevent escape. Make sure that the kitten cannot chew on anything inappropriate or dangerous. Make sure that all chemicals and cleaning solutions are safely put away. Cats will eat anything, including needles with sewing thread, rubber bands, and Christmas tinsel.

If you already have another cat in the house, keep the kitten in one room as they slowly adjust to each other’s presence. You will also want to keep your kitten isolated until the veterinarian determines that it does not have anything contagious to your other cat(s).

Kittens are natural hunters and will pounce, teethe, and use their claws on anything. We recommend getting your kitten a scratching post and some toys to play with. When he chews or claws something inappropriate, tell him “no” and get an appropriate toy to distract him with.

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Get your kitten used to you looking in his mouth and ears and also handling his feet. This will help when he needs to be medicated later on. If he will let you start brushing his teeth, that is even better.

You cat will live a longer and healthier life indoors. A cat can be quite content to live its entire life indoors provided that its owner gives it affection and companionship, and environmental stimulation.

Links To All Social Media Sites Can Be Found On Our Website
CPVH.com/Social

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