

Welcome home your new
cat/kitten



Congratulations on Your Adoption!

Thank you for selecting Healing and Hope Animal Foundation as your adoption partner! We are genuinely thrilled for you and sincerely hope that you and your new furry friend embark on a journey filled with joy and companionship at home.

To assist you in ensuring a seamless transition for your pet, we've compiled this informative packet, brimming with valuable tips. We understand that bringing a new pet into your home can be a significant change for everyone involved, including your family. While we encourage thorough preparation, it's essential to remain flexible, acknowledging that animals can exhibit different behaviors in a home environment compared to the shelter.

As outlined in your adoption contract, we highly recommend scheduling a visit to your veterinarian within the initial days of adoption. Despite our disclosure of all known medical issues, this early check-up is crucial to acquaint your vet with your new pet and address any unforeseen concerns.

Keep in mind that many of our shelter pets have experienced various challenges. While you may wish for an instant connection, it's essential to understand that some pets might need time to adjust. The journey from place to place can be stressful, so approach the transition with patience and compassion. With your care and consideration, your new pet will soon become a cherished member of your family!

Once again, thank you for choosing Healing and Hope Animal Foundation. We look forward to witnessing the beautiful bond that blossoms between you and your new companion. If you have any questions or need further assistance, feel free to reach out. Here's to a lifetime of love and happiness with your new pet!

What First Time Kitten Owners Should Know

Phyllis DeGioia, Veterinary Partner Editor

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Kittens are supreme experts at getting people to fall in love with them in one glance, so be prepared for that if you go “to just look” at kittens. They are the master manipulators of cute. You may have less choice in the matter than you think, and you may be overwhelmed with the choices.



The prime time for kittens to be born depends on your geographic location, but in the United States, it ranges from April through October.

Kittens make better pets if they stay with their mother until 8 to 10 weeks of age, the time frame during which their normal physical and social

development matures. Sometimes, people will find kittens that are orphaned or in miserable shape and take them home. They will likely make good pets, but single bottle-fed babies may not have great social skills.

The Big Surprise

Kittens can have kittens.

That's what most cat owners don't understand. Cats and kittens are far more like the rabbit's reputation for reproduction than the dog's. Technically, felines can have up to five litters a year, starting really, really soon after they leave their mother.

Female kittens begin their cycles when they are 80% of their adult size, which could be as young as four months of age but is generally more like six months. Many cat owners don't understand this situation, so it's best you know this before you bring home an intact female kitten.

Fun facts:

- Cats can get pregnant during their first heat.
- A cat can go into heat as often as every two to three weeks all year.
- Unlike dogs and women, there is no bleeding to indicate she's ready.
- Unless she's spayed, she will continue to go into heat most of her entire life. Cats don't experience menopause.
- Usually, you can tell if she's in heat by her behavior. She will vocalize more loudly than usual (look up *caterwaul* in the dictionary) while calling to potential mates, lift her rear end up in the air, be more affectionate than usual, roll around the floor, and try to escape the house to find a mate. The symptoms can last anywhere from a few days to two incredibly long weeks.
- She can get pregnant again within a few weeks after she gives birth. Nursing does not prevent conception.
- The feline reproductive system is seasonal, and cats are designed to give birth when it's warm, spring through early fall.

If you would like to avoid all of this, talk to your veterinarian about when the best time is to [spay](#) or [neuter your kitten](#).

Indoor or Outdoor Kitty?

One decision you need to make right off the bat is whether or not you are going to allow your cat outside or if the cat will remain inside at all times. Indoor-only cats are much safer because they don't get hit by cars, have fights with other animals, or become prey, but that means they remain



away from their natural environment. Indoor cats need enrichment efforts to be happy and sometimes weight control efforts because cats were not designed to lounge around on the couch all day eating food they didn't hunt. Outdoor cats still need some enrichment inside, though. Outdoor cats can cause harm to the environment by possibly spreading intestinal parasites and diseases that cats and people can get from the cat's feces. If your cat is on a good parasite preventative, the risk is less. Also, outdoor cats can kill songbirds, affecting their population. Understand that your neighbors may not be happy about a

cat defecating in their yard or bothering their indoor cats. Your choice should be made by balancing potential dangers outdoors against possible boredom, stress issues, and weight gain indoors.

You can take indoor cats outside for walks on feline-specific harnesses and leashes. You could also create an outdoor cat enclosure called a catio, which can attach to your home so they can go in and out at will. If you decide to keep your kitten/cat indoors only, never let them out by themselves; if you allow “once in a while” forays into the great outdoors, do not assume they will remain in your yard.

Equipment You Will Need on Day One

If your kitten is a planned acquisition and you have time to get ready – as opposed to finding some poor scraggly thing late at night in the rain – there are a few basics you should have at home by the day you bring home your kitten.

The only things you absolutely must have immediately for a kitten are food and a litter box filled with litter. Initially, you can use any bowl for water and food, but eventually, you may wish to try food toys and puzzles for enrichment. Stainless steel or ceramic bowls are good.

Food specifically made for kittens is necessary (puppy and dog food do not have enough protein or taurine for felines to live on, although it's better than letting a stray go hungry overnight), and you definitely need litter boxes and litter as soon as you possibly can. In a pinch, a cardboard box filled with sand is good temporarily.

If you know what your kitten was eating before arriving at your house, use that same food. If you'd like to change to something else, mix the two foods together, gradually increasing the percentage of the new food over a few days or a week. If you have no clue what the kitten was eating, then any completely balanced kitten food will do (ask your veterinarian for a recommendation; see more on food below). Cats are obligate carnivores, meaning they must have a meat-based diet. They break down protein to meet their blood sugar requirements, not the carbohydrates that people use. The overall effect of your cat's nutrition can usually be seen in your cat's health; spending more on well-balanced food usually translates to fewer veterinary bills.

Litter Box and Litter

You will be amazed at how quickly a kitten takes to using a litter box. It will make more of a difference in how well your kitten adapts to your household than anything else you provide. Note that these are two items, not one: a box and litter, both of which come in numerous types. Many

cats prefer much larger litter boxes than what is sold in pet supply stores, something like a concrete mixing tub found at hardware stores, but for a kitten, you can start out with a standard-sized box. For one feline, have two boxes in different locations. Some cats like the boxes to be on different floors or at opposite ends of the house. Most dislike having them adjacent to the washing machine and dryer, and they really don't want it near their food bowls. Each box should be scooped clean once or twice every single day, and the litter in it should be replaced every one to two weeks. When you are replacing the litter, wash the empty box with a fragrance-free detergent and make sure it's dry before new litter is put in it.

While it can be tempting to delay scooping or cleaning the box, don't. Just don't. Even though they are kittens, they are fastidious and prefer clean toilets (don't you?). Dirty boxes contribute to behavioral problems in which cats decide to pee and poop outside the box. Sometimes they get in the habit of going outside the box in a way that is appropriately called [inappropriate elimination](#). You want, with all your heart, to prevent your kitten from becoming one of those cats. Inappropriate elimination is one of the main reasons cats are surrendered to the shelter because it is difficult to live with the odor and cleanup of cat urine – which is nasty – and cat poop on your floors and carpeting. The best approach is to prevent it from happening.

Your first decision about litter is clumping or non-clumping. Clumping litter means the urine ends up forming into a sort of ball that is easily scoopable. Non-clumping litter tends to be clay, which some people prefer because of the way it absorbs odors. There is scented (to cover up the smell for your nose), unscented (because some cats don't like the fragrance), lightweight (more uses per bag), dust-free (if either you or the feline have respiratory issues), natural (biodegradable and renewable sources such as corn, wood, pine, wheat, cedar, recycled paper products, etc.) and flushable (check your local ordinances first, as some cities do not allow flushing of pet feces).

Most cats have litter preferences, although some will use any material no matter the texture or what it smells like. The best way to find out what your cat likes is to offer choices of litter and see which one is used. Try a few different types to make this experiment as accurate as possible and give each option enough time for the kitten to decide.

Behavior: What is Acceptable, What Isn't

Remember that what is cute for a kitten is not likely to be cute for an adult cat. However, it's easy to train kittens, and training can be the same type of bonding experience it is with dogs. You can train a kitten to use the litter box, to come, to kill the toy, to jump on command, and so on. Use treats to teach them to come by shaking a can of something tasty, so when you need to find the little Houdini, they come to you.

Unfortunately, you can also train the kitten to play-bite with your hand or jump on your moving feet under the covers. It may be adorable when they are three months old, but it's guaranteed not to be so cute in short order. Whatever you want to prevent in your adult cat should not be taught to your kitten, or you may be experiencing it daily for well over 15 years.

Food

You can unintentionally train your kitten not to eat anything other than the one food they grew up with, which is usually kibble. Adult cats really aren't that picky, it's just that kittens imprint on what you give them, so they seem finicky. They need to be introduced to different foods when they are kittens. If they ever become sick, their salvation may rest in their ability to eat something different, such as therapeutic canned food or kibble that has a different taste and texture. They need to try different types of canned foods, different kinds of meat, dry food, and dehydrated food. They can have one good quality food that is their normal fare, but who knows when you might run out of food or evacuate from a natural disaster, and you want to give something like chicken or fish. If they have urinary problems because they don't take in enough water, they will need to eat canned food. Cats can be so stubborn on this subject that they will starve themselves rather than eat canned food.

Now is a good time to decide if you will regularly feed canned, dry, or a mixture. Cats have taste and texture preferences, and you should see what they like best. Fresh water should be available at all times. Giving at least some canned food everyday is a good idea and provides extra moisture. Change up flavors and textures regularly, even in canned – pate vs. shredded - and your adult cat will be much easier to work with should they get sick.

Vaccinations

Babies of every species are born with immature immune systems. Usually, nature provides protection with antibodies found in the colostrum, the milk the mother produces for the first few days after giving birth, but not all cats have good maternal antibodies and not all kittens get colostrum. While maternal immunity is in the kitten's system, any vaccines given will be inactivated. Vaccines will not be able to "take" until maternal antibodies have sufficiently dropped.

Vaccinations typically start around six weeks of age, and are continued every two to four weeks until the kitten is about four months old. Which vaccines are recommended will depend on your kitten's lifestyle and local ordinances. The reason for revaccinating is due to the window of susceptibility - when maternal antibodies wane – which can be at varied times in kittens, not because a vaccine works better after the prior one. By 14-20

weeks of age, maternal antibodies are gone, and the kitten must be able to continue on their own immune system. Kittens receive a series of vaccines ending at a time when we know the baby's own immune system should be able to respond to those vaccines.

A kitten's vaccination schedule is staggered because vaccinations produce a much greater response if they follow a vaccine given 2-4 weeks prior. Some of those vaccines are good for life, some are not.

What vaccinations your kitten needs and when is often determined by your geographical location. Veterinarians follow the recommendations of the [American Association of Feline Practitioners](#).

Preventive Measures

Puppies and kittens should be dewormed. Often this is done using products such as [pyrantel pamoate](#), [fenbendazole](#), or [milbemycin](#). The exact schedule will depend on the product being used and your veterinarian's recommendations. Recommendations for ascarid (a type of worm) control in kittens older than six months of age vary. The Companion Animal Parasite Council recommends using parasite control products effective against ascarids monthly. Cats and dogs are susceptible to heartworms so be sure to check with your veterinarian about preventative heartworm medication for your new kitten.

Enrichment

Environmental enrichment is necessary, especially for indoor cats. Think of it as a boredom buster. Environmental enrichment during kittenhood prevents behavior problems during adulthood. You cannot overdo it. Kittens that are only three weeks old like to play with crinkle balls or bells that make noises (although hopefully, you are not starting out with a 3-week-old kitten). Maybe they didn't have those toys where they were born, so start building their enrichment with those items. By five weeks of age, they can use scratching boards, run through tunnels, jump into cardboard boxes, squeak dog toys, and so on. It can be as simple as

shredded paper or crunchy packing paper that you toss on the floor. As long as you don't frighten the kittens, it's okay.

The love of cardboard boxes is a life-long passion with cats: "If I fit, I sit." Kittens like to climb, so carpeted cat trees are fantastic toys, especially when adjacent to a window to the street; a kitten rearranging your desktop is less so.



Kitten-Proofing

Kittens have no sense of mortality or danger whatsoever and must be protected from themselves. At around eight to ten weeks of age some can be fearful, and they tend not to get into too much trouble, but around 10 weeks, kittens start to practice the art of pure love. They get cuddles, they get kisses, and they get bold and courageous so they jump off things, dash underfoot, chew cords, jump on the hot stove, and play attack the dog. This period will last for a few months.

Help them help themselves by keeping a safe home for them. They will not understand why you need to kitten-proof the house. Because baby kittens are quite able to get to the top of tall dressers or kitchen cabinets, your baby-proofing has to be 3-D, not just the first few inches up from the floor. You may understandably presume for a moment that your 8-week-old kitten has just levitated.

When your kitty is still tiny, double-check the washer, dryer, and dishwasher before you start them because kitties will nap inside. If you have any furniture that reclines, check before you put the footrest down because kitties will find a way to nap in there.

Keep certain “toys” – as they will be viewed by the kitten – out of reach, such as string, yarn, milk-jug bands, hair bands, and the like, as they may otherwise have to be removed surgically.

Start out by giving the wee one a small space, perhaps a bathroom or laundry room, shut off by doors or gates (remember first to check if the kitten is small enough to get through the gate slats because they occasionally seem to go boneless). They should feel safe and comfortable in the small space before they get more space. As they grow, gradually expand their space and gain familiarity with the house. That way they don't lose track of where the litter box is. Houses can be very, very big to small kittens. They are also adept at finding the tiniest, most tucked-away sleeping spots (think of the recliner), so a smaller search area will likely save you some moments of panic searching.

Don't let them have a free run of the household without supervision. If they get into trouble, they are back to a room with a closed door.

Scratching

Scratching is a natural behavior of cats. They do it for a couple of reasons, one of which is to mark their territory. They have scent glands on their paws. Scratching removes old nails and allows the growth of new ones. Since their nails are their primary method of protection as well as their hunting weapons, they have an instinct to preserve them. They'll scratch on anything,

including your furniture and curtains, so direct them to scratch on appropriate materials, specifically scratching posts. If you get a cat tree, get one with a scratching post and put a couple of scratching posts around the house.

Hunting

Cats are natural predators. Hunting is hard-wired in them, and there is no way to eliminate it. It has nothing to do with how well-fed they are; they will still hunt if they are not hungry, they just won't consume their prey. Feral cat mothers bring home dead or injured prey to teach their kittens how to eat. Many people get barn cats specifically for rodent control. You can indulge their instinct indoors with certain toys, but there is nothing like live prey. Indoor cats will hunt rodents that come inside.

Cat Carriers

Unless your kitten arrived as a stray or in a cardboard box, you may already have a [cat carrier](#), but if you don't, you will need one. Your cat will have to go to the veterinarian sometimes, or you may move, your house may catch on fire, or you may need to be evacuated from a natural disaster. There are many types of carriers: some open in the front, or on top, or both; some come apart, and so on. You can [train your cat](#) to accept it. It's much safer for your kitten in there than being held in your arms where they can jump out. You can leave it out all the time, and sometimes toss treats or toys in, so when it is time to go, your kitten does not feel that they are being shoved into some random alien space station.

Also, get your kitten [microchipped](#), and don't forget to register the chip unless your clinic does it for you. Lost cats are returned to owners at much lower rates than dogs in part because of a lack of identifying information (i.e., microchip, collar with tags).

Making an effort to provide your kitten with the tools for a good adult life will pay off wonderfully for the rest of the cat's life. From the day you bring them home until the end of their life, your life will be enhanced by your relationship with this hilariously funny, tender species. May your lives together be filled with joy!

Toxic Substances for Cats

Cats are a different species, so some things we can eat or ingest may essentially poison them. If you know what your cat has ingested, you can

call the [ASPCA Poison Control Center](#) for a fee, at (888) 426-4435, or contact a veterinarian immediately.

- [Alcohol](#)
- [Antifreeze](#)
- Caffeine
- [Cannabis](#)
- [Chocolate](#)
- [Cigarettes](#), nicotine, [e-liquid for electronic cigarettes](#)
- [Dishwashing liquid, detergent/dishwasher tablets](#)
- Fabric softener sheets
- [Grapes and raisins](#)
- [Ibuprofen](#) and naproxen
- [Lilies](#)
- Liquid potpourri
- Minoxidil (Rogaine)
- Mosquito repellent with DEET
- Nasal decongestants
- Onions, garlic, chives
- Pesticides and [rodenticides](#)
- Topical medications
- Wild mushrooms
- [Yeast dough](#)

What First Time Cat Owners Should Know

Phyllis DeGioia, Veterinary Partner Editor

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Perhaps you have never lived with an adult cat before and have decided to bring one into your home for the first time for one of many possible reasons: you adopted an adult because you prefer knowing the cat's adult temperament, a stray decided to join you (it usually is their



choice), or you somehow inherited one. What should you expect, and what do you need?

Each cat has their own preferences for almost everything in their world, and it's a learning process for you to find out what those preferences are.

Cats typically do

not have a dog's happy-go-lucky "Anything is fine!" approach to life. Some cats don't care what goes on around them, and some cats have surgically precise preferences. They will let you know.

Indoor/Outdoor

The first decision you need to make is whether or not you are going to allow your cat outside or if the cat will remain inside at all times, although it's truly difficult to make an indoor cat out of

one that used to live outside. Indoor-only cats are safer because they don't get hit by cars, have fights with other animals, or become prey, but that means they remain away from their natural environment. Indoor cats need enrichment efforts to be happy, and sometimes weight control efforts, because cats were not designed to lounge around on the couch all day eating food they didn't hunt. Outdoor cats need their indoor basic needs met, such as hiding spaces, resting areas, vertical spaces, and so on. The choice should be made balancing potential dangers outdoors against possible boredom and weight gain indoors. You can take indoor cats outside for walks on feline-specific harnesses and leashes. If you decide to keep your cat indoors only, never let them out by themselves; do not allow "once in a while" forays into the great outdoors and assume they will remain in your yard.

The day the cat comes home, you will need the following.

The only things you absolutely must have for a cat are food, something in which to eat and drink, and a litter box filled with litter. Initially, you can use any bowl for water and food, but eventually you can switch to food dispensing and puzzle toys. If you prefer a bowl, get a bacteria-resistant stainless steel or ceramic. Real cat food is necessary (dog food does not have enough protein, although it's better than letting a stray go hungry overnight) and you definitely need litter boxes and litter as soon as you possibly can. In a pinch, a cardboard box filled with sand is good temporarily.

If you know what your cat was eating before arriving at your house, use that same food. If you'd like to change to something else, mix the two foods together, gradually increasing the percentage of the new food over a few days. If you have no clue what the cat was eating, then any new cat food will have to do. Cats are obligate carnivores, meaning they must have a meat-based diet. Cats break down protein to meet their blood sugar requirements, not the carbohydrates that people use. The overall quality of your cat's nutrition can usually be seen in your cat's health; spending more on good quality food usually translates to fewer veterinary bills.

Litter Boxes and Litter

The litter box and litter will make more of a difference in how well your cat adapts to your household than anything else you provide. Note that these are two items, not one: a box and litter, both of which come in numerous types. Research tells us that cats prefer much larger litter boxes than what are sold in pet supply stores, and veterinary behaviorists recommend something like a concrete mixing tub found at hardware stores. For one cat, have two boxes in different locations. Some cats like the boxes to be on different floors, or at opposite ends of the house. Most dislike having them adjacent to the washing machine and dryer, and they really don't want it near their food bowls. Older or overweight cats may have difficulty walking up and

down stairs or jumping up to litter boxes placed on higher surfaces. Each box should be scooped clean once or twice every single day, and the litter in it should be replaced every one to two weeks. When you are replacing the litter, wash the empty box with a detergent and make sure it's dry before new litter is put in it.

While it can be tempting to delay scooping or cleaning the box, don't. Just don't. Cats are fastidious and prefer clean toilets (don't you?). Dirty boxes contribute to behavioral problems in which cats decide to pee and poop outside the box. Sometimes they get in the habit of going outside the box in a way that is appropriately called [inappropriate elimination](#). You want, with all your heart, to prevent your cat from doing that. Inappropriate elimination is the main reason cats are surrendered to the shelter because it is difficult to live with the odor and clean up of cat urine – which is nasty – and cat poop on your floors and carpeting. Sometimes, it's difficult to get a cat to stop doing it, and the best approach is to prevent it from ever happening.

Your first decision about litter is clumping or non-clumping. Clumping litter means the urine ends up formed into a sort of ball that is easily scoopable. Non-clumping litter tends to be clay, which some people prefer because of the way it absorbs odors. Clay, non-scented litter is best. Cats can have an aversion to wood, cedar, and the litter pearls. There is scented (to cover up the smell for your nose), unscented (because some cats don't like the fragrance), lightweight (more uses per bag), dust free (if either of you have respiratory issues), natural (biodegradable and renewable sources such as corn, wood, pine, wheat, recycled paper products, etc.) and flushable (check your local ordinances first, as some cities do not allow flushing). There's even litter for cats who don't like to use the litter box, which has an herbal attractant.

Most cats have litter preferences, although some will use any material no matter the texture is or what it smells like. The best way to find out what your cat likes is to offer choices of litter and see which one is used the most. Try a few different types to make this experiment as accurate as possible and give each option enough time for the cat to decide.

Items you will need eventually, but do not have to have on Day One.

An ID tag is always a good idea so that your neighbors will know your cat is not a stray, although cats can get hung up on them. Even a collar alone will show that this cat is not likely to be a stray. Consider microchipping your cat as well so if they are found and taken to the shelter you can easily be reunited. Only 2% of cats taken to shelters are reunited with their people and a microchip can greatly improve those odds.

In the United States, rabies vaccination requirements for cats vary from county to county. Ask your veterinarian what the rabies vaccination requirement is where you live. Even if not required

by law, vaccinating outdoor pets against rabies is always a good idea. Once your cat is vaccinated, place the rabies tag on the collar or harness with the ID tag and city license, if a license is required by your municipality. Make sure to get a collar specifically for cats that has a breakaway feature so your kitty won't get stuck squeezing through tight areas or climbing trees.

Unless your cat arrived as a stray or in a cardboard box, you may already have a cat carrier, but if you don't you will need one. Your cat will have to go to the veterinarian sometimes, or you may



move, your house may catch on fire, or you may need to be evacuated from a natural disaster. There are many types of carriers: some open in the front, or on top, or both, some come apart, and so on. You can [train your cat](#) to accept it.

A scratching post or scratcher box is useful because you don't want your cat scratching your furniture. When the carpet or scratching surface is frayed or worn out you will need to replace it with

another one. Scratching is a natural behavior for cats and cannot be eliminated, so it's best to direct the cat to scratch on something of your choice. Clipping nails and flexible nail tips can be beneficial. If your cat has a long-haired coat, you absolutely must have tools to brush it or it will mat, causing skin irritation and an eventual need to be groomed (usually done very short as a lion cut with a clipper). Long-haired cats should have a brush, a comb, and a detangler. Most dog groomers do not accept cats for grooming, and many sensitive cats need to be sedated at the veterinarian's for clipping. If your cat has a short coat, a comb and brush will still be needed, just not as often and likely without the difficult consequences of matting.

Your cat may enjoy a cat bed, and some use them more than others. Cats will nap anywhere they feel like it, usually in a warm place such as a spot of sunshine, your lap, on top of your laptop. They may decide that a certain spot on the couch is theirs, which may or may not work for you.

Most cats love cat trees. They like climbing the carpeting, hiding in them, looking out the window from the highest part, and slapping around the parts that hang down for that purpose. Place it by a window for your cat's enrichment. Remember to vacuum the hair off from it, and descent it once in a while so it doesn't start to smell.

Some cat toys will be left untouched while the cat has a fantastic time whapping around the plastic cap to a bottle or the ring that attaches the cap to the bottle. Pieces of crumpled up paper, pen caps, and so on work as toys. Toys that engage you with your cat are usually appreciated, such as a feather attached to a plastic fishing pole. With cats, you never know what they prefer until you try it. Some cat owners find that anything they purchase that is designed for cats is ignored, and that the cat will decide what is interesting to play with. Toys are what the cat considers to be a toy, not you. Be careful not to give them string, yarn, or ribbons because those can become a [linear foreign body](#) that must be surgically removed.

Toxins

Many substances are toxic to cats and learning what they are may help your cat live a longer life. While many people know how dangerous antifreeze or rodenticides are, items such as ibuprofen, naproxen, aspirin, mosquito repellent, nasal decongestants, cannabis, glow sticks, and many flowers found in bouquets - especially lilies, are toxic to cats. If you suspect your cat has ingested any of these items, call your veterinarian or a pet poison hotline and ask if you should bring your cat in.

Cats cannot metabolize ibuprofen and other NSAIDs the way people do. Do not give any medication, over the counter or prescription, to your cat without discussing it first with your veterinarian.

The ASPCA has a list of [plants that are toxic](#) specifically to cats.

Easy Keepers

As long as you keep the litter boxes clean and long-haired cats brushed, cats are the easiest of easy keepers. Your life is not ruled by their bladder, they don't need to be walked, you don't need to disinfect a cage or aquarium, you don't need to go to an expensive specialty store for their food, they don't mind being alone for a while, and when they want to be with you, they are with you in spirit and soul. Few aspects of life are as wonderful as a happy cat in your home, purring on your lap.

Toxic Substances for Cats

Cats are a different species, so some things we can eat or ingest may essentially poison them. If you know what your cat has ingested, you can call the [ASPCA Poison Control Center](#) for a fee, at (888) 426-4435, or contact a veterinarian immediately.

- [Alcohol](#)
- Antifreeze

- Caffeine
- Cannabis
- Chocolate
- Cigarettes, nicotine, e-liquid for electronic cigarettes
- Dishwashing liquid, detergent/dishwasher tablets
- Fabric softener sheets
- Grapes and raisins
- Ibuprofen and naproxen
- Lilies
- Liquid potpourri
- Minoxidil (Rogaine)
- Mosquito repellent with DEET
- Nasal decongestants
- Onions, garlic, chives
- Pesticides and rodenticides
- Topical medications
- Wild mushrooms
- Yeast dough

The Basics

If you wish to change the brand of food, we recommend that you purchase another nutritious cat food and introduce it gradually by mixing the current food in with the new food. We also recommend providing food only at mealtimes. Leaving food out for your cat to eat whenever they want, can lead to obesity and other diseases.

Water: Provide fresh water in a clean bowl daily. Your cat should have access to the water at all times.

Litter Box: Place an appropriately sized, uncovered litter box with approximately 1-2 inches of litter in a quiet but accessible location. If you have a covered litter box, remove the cover for the first week to allow your cat to get used to the new litter box.

The Honeymoon Stage: Adopting a new family member is exciting, but there will likely be an adjustment period for both you and your new pet. There may be times when you feel overwhelmed and have second thoughts about your adoption. It's important to remember that during the transition period, your cat/kitten may display behaviors that were not discussed at the time of adoption. It's normal and to be expected. It may take time for your new pet to adjust to your routine. If you have any questions about your cat's behavior, we encourage you to keep a journal of the behavior

Tips for a Happy Cat

Take It Slow

Cats can be easily overwhelmed by new spaces, so when you get home, set your cat up in a small quiet room. Keep the door closed. Be sure your cat has access to comfy bedding, hiding spots, toys, food, water, a scratcher, and litter box. Interact with the cat on their terms –sit a few feet away from them and let them approach you for petting or attention. When the cat is moving around this space confidently, you can begin to slowly introduce them to the rest of your home. Some cats will settle in within a few hours, but most will need a few days or more.

Litter Box

Most cats do best with large, uncovered litter boxes. For kittens or senior cats, be sure the box has lower sides for easy access. Most cats prefer about 1"-2" of unscented litter in the box. Place the box in a quiet area. Cats are more likely to consistently use the litter box when it is kept clean. We recommend you scoop twice a day and perform a full clean every two weeks. Use mild dish soap or a pet-friendly enzymatic cleaner (avoid bleach and other harsh chemicals).

Make Carriers Happy Places

Getting your new cat used to the carrier means vet visits and travel will be much easier—and it's super easy to do! Just set the carrier up in a spot where your cat or kitten likes to hang out and keep it out all the time. Prop the door open, place some comfy bedding inside, and feed a treat in the carrier at least once a day. You can also use play to get your cat running in and out of the carrier. If your cat rests in their carrier regularly, mission accomplished!

Scratching Surfaces

Cats have a need to scratch, so be sure to provide plenty of cat-friendly scratching surfaces. Most cats enjoy both horizontal cardboard scratchers and scratching posts

(for posts, pick one that is sturdy and tall enough for your cat to get a good stretch). Reward your cat with treats and praise when they use their scratchers.

Daily Interactive Playtime

Playing with your cat is a great way for you to bond and help them feel less stressed. Cats love chasing, pouncing on, and leaping after wand toys. Keep play interesting by having a couple of different wand toys on daily rotation. When using wand toys, allow your cat to “catch” the toy a few times during play and end playtime with a yummy treat. A good play session can last from 10 to 15 minutes. Always use toys during play, and not your hands or feet. If your cat tries to play with hands or feet, become a statue by folding your arms and looking away and wait a few minutes before giving any more attention. Avoid petting or picking up during or directly after playtime.

Feline DIY Enrichment

Enrichment is essential for cats and kittens of all ages and keeping your cat's environment as exciting and stimulating as possible will promote a happy and healthy life. Check out these great DIY projects that will keep you and your cat entertained. These resources include food and environmental enrichment guides to help you make your own fun and affordable cat toys.

Cat Language

CAT LANGUAGE



Cat Body Language

Body Language of Feline Anxiety



Slight crouching



Major crouching

More Subtle Signs of Fear & Anxiety



Dilated Eyes



Ears Turned Back,
Furrowed Brow



Staring,
Focused on Object



Hiding,
Looks Half Asleep



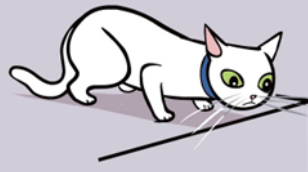
Laying on Side,
Tail Flicking



Hair Raised, Staring,
Ears Turned Back



Walking with Flat Back,
Tail Down, Head Down



Ready to Jump Off Perch



Suddenly Grooming,
Excessive Grooming

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Reducing the Stress of Veterinary Visits for Cats

By Tammy Hunter, DVM; Cheryl Yuill, DVM, MSc, CVH

Why is my cat so stressed when I take her to the veterinary clinic?

Cats are very attached to their home territory, and most of our pet cats live a very sheltered life with a very predictable routine that does not involve traveling away from home. For most cats, a visit to the veterinarian is an overwhelming experience. The cat is taken out of its familiar home environment, usually roughly pushed into a carrier, put into a noisy car, driven to the veterinary clinic, taken into the reception area where there are intense smells from many other pets and people. They are then taken into an examination room where an unfamiliar person examines them and administers various treatments. Any one of these things can be stressful, and when they are all combined together, it's no wonder that your cat is frightened or stressed.

My veterinarian says I should put my cat in a carrier for travel. Why?

Veterinarians recommend the use of a carrier for travel because it is the safest and most secure way to transport animals. Once you arrive at your veterinarian's office, your cat who is in a secure carrier will be safe from being bothered by other curious pets and will feel less vulnerable. A cat that is being held in your arms and becomes frightened may respond by leaping out of your arms, potentially injuring you in the process, and putting your cat at risk for injury or escape.

What is the best type of carrier?

Individual cats may have specific preferences for a carrier, but some options are better than others. Although cardboard cat carriers (available from pet stores and animal shelters) are inexpensive and disposable, they should only be used as a temporary form of transport because a determined cat can break out of them in no time. Durable options for transporting your cat range from soft-sided carriers, to wire crates, to hard plastic carriers with wire doors. Whatever the type of permanent carrier you choose, it should be easy to clean and you should be able to get your cat in and out of it without a struggle. Purchase a carrier that fits your cat's size. If you have several cats, provide each one of them with their own carrier. The ideal carrier is strong, lightweight, and waterproof, with a large opening to allow easy access to the cat, and an easy to remove top with 'quick release' fasteners. If you have a carrier with a removable top, your cat may be able to remain nestled in the bottom of the carrier while your veterinarian performs some parts of the routine physical examination. And if your cat needs to stay in the hospital for any reason, the bottom part of the carrier can be put into the hospital cage to provide a familiar and comforting bed. Whatever you choose for a carrier, you should put a towel or blanket in the bottom, both to provide a comfortable place to sit or lie down, and to soak up any fluids in case she has an accident on the way to the clinic. It may be wise to take along a spare blanket and a plastic bag for any soiled bedding, just in case

My cat struggles when I try to put her into her carrier. Do you have any tips?

For most cats, the only time they ever see their carrier is when it is brought out immediately before going to the vet. Even if nothing unpleasant happens to the cat during the veterinary visit, that carrier will be associated with the car ride and the unfamiliar sounds and smells of the average veterinary office. It is these stress-inducing associations that cause cats to resist getting into the carrier. You can help your cat get over the fear of a carrier by developing positive associations between the carrier and positive experiences. The first thing to do is to avoid storing the carrier in the garage or basement and only bringing it out when a trip to the veterinarian is imminent. Instead, open the door or remove the top and keep the carrier out in an area where your cat likes to sleep or play. This way, the cat can begin to associate it with the familiar sights and scents of home. Set it up as your cat's own private sleeping quarters or private dining room by placing her cat bed or her food and water dishes in the carrier. Or simply use the carrier as the spot where she gets treats. If your cat already has negative associations with the current carrier that you are using, consider purchasing a new carrier that does not resemble the old one. Cats use pheromones to mark familiar objects, and spritzing the carrier with 3-4 squirts of Feliway®, a synthetic copy of the cat's facial pheromone, may help create a sense of familiarity or security in the cat's environment. For more information about pheromones, see the handouts "Medications to Reduce the Stress of Veterinary Visits for Cats", and "Cat Behavior and Training – Crate Training and Travel". If you do not have time to develop these positive associations before your next scheduled veterinary visit, make the carrier smell familiar to assure your cat that it is a safe haven. Place a blanket, towel, or even an old item of your clothing into the carrier and spray the carrier and blankets with Feliway® at least half an hour before you are going to use it.

My cat doesn't like car rides. Do you have any suggestions for reducing that stress?

Safety is the most important consideration when transporting your cat; the carrier needs to be secure (to prevent escape) and it needs to be placed within the vehicle in a position that holds it securely in place should you have to brake suddenly. Never consider traveling with your cat loose in the car. To reduce the stress of the car ride, spray your car interior with a couple of squirts of Feliway® 30 minutes to 1 hour before you are leaving. Bring a blanket or large towel with you, and once the carrier is secured in the car, cover it with the towel to reduce visual stimulation. Once you start driving, try to avoid any sudden braking, acceleration, or sharp turns. Tune the radio to a soothing station and make sure the heater or air conditioner does not blow directly into the carrier.

What should I do when I arrive at the clinic?

Ideally, try to schedule your appointment for a quieter time of the day if possible. If your cat is really nervous, you may want to check in with the staff on your arrival to see if you can bring the cat directly into an examination room rather than waiting in the reception area. Some veterinary clinics have a separate room for cats or a separate entrance. When you are moving the carrier from the car to the clinic, try not to rush, ask your veterinarian if you can put the cat's blanket on the examination table. Your veterinarian may suggest taking the lid off the carrier so that your

cat does not have to be pulled out of the carrier, or maybe can even stay in it during part of the examination.

Can I give my cat a sedative or anti-anxiety medication to decrease stress?

If your cat's stress or fear is profound, AND she has no health concerns, your veterinarian may recommend giving some sort of prescription medication before the visit. However, most sedatives have side effects, and using them may not be in the best interests of your cat. Please see the handout "Medications to Reduce the Stress of Veterinary Visits for Cats" for more information. With regard to complementary medicines, the marketplace is full of products that claim to treat anxiety. While natural products are often thought of as benign, this is not always the case, particularly when it comes to treating cats, who have different metabolic processes than we do. Please speak to your veterinarian for more information.

Are there any other tips to reduce my cat's stress levels during the veterinary visit?

Unless otherwise directed by your veterinarian, do not feed your cat for several hours before her appointment to reduce the chance for vomiting or letting the bowels or bladder go during the trip. If you have a kitten, train her to use a cat carrier as a haven early on (see handout "Cat Behavior and Training – Crate Training and Travel"). Unlike dogs, who often associate car trips with fun destinations such as the park or trail, few cats go in the car for a pleasant adventure. You can teach your cat to relax in the car by taking short trips that have a positive outcome. For example, put your cat in the carrier, give her one of her favorite treats or toys, and take a short drive that ends up back home. During the entire process, speak to her in a calm and reassuring voice. For some cats, a Thundershirt®, which swaddles the cat much like swaddling an infant, may reduce anxiety. One of the most effective ways to decrease your cat's anxiety level is to remain calm and relaxed during the visit. Speak to your cat in a calm and soothing voice and reassure her by petting her on her head or stroking her in her favorite spot.

Desensitization and Counterconditioning to Nail Trimmers for Cats

December 1, 2021 (published) Sarah Nugen, Class of 2023; Sandra Robbins BS, CVT, VTS (Anesthesia & Analgesia), CPDT-KSA, KPA-CTP; Katharine Schwarz, RVT, KPA CTP

How to help your cat get used to having their nails trimmed

1. Start by putting the trimmers in a common area like your living room where your cat can choose to explore them at their pace. Putting treats around the nail trimmers can help to create more positive associations with them. If your cat will not go near the trimmers, feed them treats at a comfortable distance. Gradually decrease the distance between them and the nail trimmers.
2. Next, have the nail trimmers nearby when you are interacting with your cat. This interaction may be a play session or a time when your cat is comfortably settled on your lap accepting treats. You do not need to move the nail trimmers around, just have them within view of your cat when they are near you.
3. Let your cat see you lift and put down the nail trimmers. If your cat enjoys lying on your lap, you can have the nail trimmers near, pick them up and put them down, then feed your cat a treat.
4. Practice bringing the nail trimmers to your cat's foot, then moving them away and giving your cat a treat. If your cat is too stressed about this step, only bring the nail trimmers part way to your cat's foot before putting them back down and giving a treat.
5. After your cat has learned to tolerate a single nail being isolated and examined with the trimmers nearby, cut the toenail. Then begin adding toes to individual sessions until you can cut multiple toenails in one session.

Overall, you want your cat to feel as comfortable, safe, and relaxed as possible when getting their nails trimmed. Work with your veterinarian and staff to make nail trims at home and at the clinic the most positive experience possible for your cat.

Fear-related Aggression in Cats

December 1, 2021 (published) | June 5, 2023 (revised)

Sarah Nugen, Class of 2023; Sandra Robbins BS, CVT, VTS (Anesthesia & Analgesia), CPDT-KSA, KPA-CTP; Katharine Schwarz, RVT, KPA CTP

Fear in Cats

Just like us, cats feel fear and their behavior changes in response to it. What makes one cat



fearful or anxious may not make another one feel that way. We observe a cat's body language to understand how they are feeling. Fearful cats make themselves small and are tense. Their bodies will be low to the table or ground, and their legs will be tucked under their bodies. Fearful cats are constantly scanning, and their ears may change directions frequently. Sometimes they are frozen with their ears flattened and their pupils enlarged.

Tails may swish or be tucked underneath their bodies. Some cats growl, hiss, swat, scratch, and bite.

Fear-related Aggression

Fear is a normal emotional response in cats, and just because they are fearful does not mean they will respond aggressively. Each cat's behavior is individual and influenced by environmental stressors, socialization as kittens, and life experiences. For example, a cat may respond aggressively when fearful at a veterinary clinic for a nail trim, whereas other cats may become frozen. In both situations, the cat perceives a person or the nail trim as threatening; however, both are the same fear response but expressed differently. Cats brought in as kittens frequently for [nail trims](#) may not be fearful since they had previous positive experiences with lots of treats.

Getting to the Source of Fear-related Aggression

When diagnosing and treating fear aggression, your veterinarian may take a detailed history to determine your cat's triggers. They will often ask questions about your cat's behavior and environment.

- Who is the target of the aggression? (people, other cats, etc.)?
- What does your cat look like when this is happening? For example, ear position, tail movement, etc.
- When did the behavior start?
- Are there new animals or people in the household?
- Have there been any changes in the household?
- Are there any changes in your cat's energy levels or eating?
- Are there any changes in your cat's normal activity?

Behavior changes may occur as a result of pain or other medical conditions. A thorough physical exam and other diagnostics, such as X-rays or blood work, may be needed.

Working with a Fear-aggressive Cat

There isn't one single way to treat fear-related aggression because every cat is different. To help your cat feel safe, provide appropriate hiding and vertical spaces. This may be an elevated cat tree, shelf, or quiet room. It is important that your cat can access these spaces all the time, including when there are visitors.

Long-term treatment will involve changing emotional and behavioral responses. This is done by reintroducing the triggers, identified in the history in a gradual and systematic way. Food, play, and other rewards may be used for this process. Sometimes medications may be beneficial. Discuss with your veterinarian what may be best for your cat.

Blood Work is a Basic Evaluation

Tool Becky Lundgren, DVM Date Published: 03/01/2004 Date Reviewed/Revised: 05/24/2021

What does it mean when a veterinarian says she needs to run some blood work on your pet?

Blood work - pre surgical or otherwise - is usually a combination of a complete blood count (CBC) and a blood chemical analysis. Blood work is a basic evaluation tool. Pets, particularly senior ones, should have a CBC at every annual examination. In addition, blood work allows a veterinarian to monitor the progression of a pet's disease. When the blood sample is drawn from your pet, both the cells and the fluid they "travel" in are examined.

Complete Blood Count (CBC) The cell part of the blood is examined in the CBC. The CBC determines the number of erythrocytes (red blood cells), the number and type of leukocytes (white blood cells), the number of platelets (thrombocytes), the hemoglobin level, and the hematocrit (packed cell volume, PCV). Erythrocytes carry oxygen throughout the body. Leukocytes fight infection and are part of the immune system. There are five different types of white blood cells: neutrophils, lymphocytes, basophils, eosinophils, and monocytes. Platelets are clotting proteins and indicate how fast your pet's blood can clot; slow clotting can be a serious problem. A CBC can tell your veterinarian if your pet has an unusual number of erythrocytes (anemia, polycythemia), leukocytes (leukopenia, leukocytosis), or platelets (thrombocytopenia).

Blood Chemistry A chemistry panel (blood chem, chemistry screen), tests kidney function, liver function, electrolyte levels, etc. Blood chemistries are run on the fluid in the blood sample. (The CBC is the examination of the cells in the blood sample.) The chemistry panel usually includes the following tests: alkaline phosphatase (SAP, ALP), alanine transaminase (alanine aminotransferase, ALT), bilirubin total (T Bili), blood urea nitrogen (BUN), creatinine, creatine kinase (CK, CPK), sodium, potassium, glucose, total protein, albumin, etc. Alkaline phosphatase, alanine transaminase, bilirubin, and albumin give your veterinarian information about the pet's liver function. Blood urea nitrogen, creatinine, and creatine kinase tell your veterinarian how well your pet's kidneys are functioning

Alkaline phosphatase An elevated alkaline phosphatase is the most common biochemical abnormality seen in "normal" animals. (In other words, clinically-normal animals can have mildly elevated levels.) Elevated levels are seen in liver injury, bone injury, pregnancy, dental disease, skeletal growth, reactive hepatopathies, and animals who are or have been taking glucocorticoids. Growing animals also normally have higher levels of this enzyme. Elevated levels can be used as a tumor marker, particularly with tumors that have metastasized to the liver. Low levels of alkaline phosphatase may not be clinically significant. However, in humans, decreased serum levels have been observed in hypothyroidism, scurvy, achondroplastic

dwarfism, magnesium deficiency, malnutrition, cardiac surgery, cardiopulmonary bypass, and hypophosphatasia.

Alanine transaminase Decreased ALT in combination with increased cholesterol levels is seen in cases of a congested liver. Increased levels are also seen in liver damage, kidney infection, chemical pollutants, or myocardial infarction.

Bilirubin (total) Elevated in liver disease, hemolytic anemia, low levels of exposure to the sun, and toxic effects to some drugs. Decreased levels are seen in people with an inefficient liver, excessive fat digestion, and possibly a diet low in nitrogen bearing foods.

Blood urea nitrogen Increases can be caused by excessive protein intake, kidney damage, certain drugs, low fluid intake, intestinal bleeding, exercise, or heart failure. Decreased levels may be due to a poor diet, malabsorption, liver damage, or low nitrogen intake.

Creatinine Low levels are sometimes seen in kidney damage, protein starvation, liver disease, or pregnancy. Elevated levels are sometimes seen in kidney disease due to the kidneys' job of excreting creatinine, muscle degeneration, and some drugs involved in impairment of kidney function.

Glucose Elevated in diabetes, liver disease, obesity, and pancreatitis due to steroid medications, or during stress. Low levels may be indicative of liver disease, overproduction of insulin, or hypothyroidism.

Total protein Decreased levels may be due to poor nutrition, liver disease, malabsorption, diarrhea, or severe burns. Increased levels are seen in lupus, liver disease, chronic infections, leukemia, etc.

Albumin High levels are rarely seen and are primarily due to dehydration. Low levels are seen in poor diets, diarrhea, fever, infection, liver disease, inadequate iron intake, third-degree burns and edemas, and hypocalcemia.

Fleas: Know your Enemy

The VIN Dermatology Consultants

Date Published: 04/12/2017 Date Reviewed/Revised: 02/05/2020

Although there are over 2000 flea species in the world, pet owners should be concerned with only one: *Ctenocephalides felis*, the cat flea. This is the flea that we find on our pets (cats, dogs, rabbits, and other species) in 99.9 percent of cases. In order to understand how to control the damage caused by this tiny little animal, learn all you can about it.

Fleas can cause serious health problems for you and your pet.

Fleas aren't just a nuisance! Fleas can kill. Fleas suck blood and blood loss leads to [anemia](#). A heavy flea burden is lethal, especially to smaller or younger animals. The cat flea has even been known to kill animals as large as dairy calves through heavy infestation.

Fleas can cause serious skin issues

Fleas can cause severe itching and also other problems such as skin infections and hair loss. Some animals can become allergic to fleas, and [flea allergy dermatitis](#) is the most common skin disease of dogs and cats.

Fleas can transmit infections and parasites

Fleas can carry and transmit a bacterium called *Bartonella* that can cause health issues in cats, dogs, and people. Fleas can carry a type of parasite, a [tapeworm](#) called *Dipylidium caninum* that can suck nutrients from the pet's intestine and cause anal itching.

Common Myths

Even though fleas are the most common parasite in dogs and cats, there are many misconceptions about them. Myths that veterinarians hear about fleas almost every day are:

Myth: *My pet cannot have fleas because he lives entirely indoors.*

Fact: Fleas thrive particularly well in the well-regulated temperatures in the home.

Myth: *My pet cannot have fleas because if there were any fleas they would be biting (insert name of a person in the family reportedly sensitive to flea bites). Since this person is not being bitten, there must not be any fleas.*

Fact: The cat flea, *Ctenocephalides felis*, can suck the blood of a wide variety of animals. However, this flea definitely does not prefer human blood and won't eat it unless absolutely necessary. Humans tend not to be bitten unless flea population numbers are high.

Myth: *We do not have fleas because we only have hardwood floors.*

Fact: Fleas love to develop in the cracks between the boards of hardwood floors.

Myth: *My pet cannot have fleas because I would see them.*

Fact: You cannot expect to see fleas because many animals will lick, groom, and chew after being bitten by a flea. This causes the flea to either jump off the pet or get swallowed.

The Flea Life Cycle

There are four life stages of the flea. For effective flea control, it is important to know how to break this life cycle in more than one place.

The flea life cycle consists of egg, larval, pupal, and adult stages. Eggs are laid in the hair coat and are designed to fall off your pet and into your home. Larvae hatch from the eggs and develop in a pet's environment by feeding on adult flea feces (i.e. digested blood) that fall out of the hair coat of the pet. Larvae eventually spin cocoons, often within carpet fibers, for pupation. Pupae are resistant to freezing, drying, and insecticides, and can lie dormant for many months! New fleas develop from pupae and can begin feeding within hours of finding a dog or cat. The entire flea life cycle can be completed in as little as three weeks.

Flea Control Strategies

New Products

Today, veterinarians have some great [flea control products](#) in our arsenal. There are now many effective and safe new products to choose from.

Break the Flea Life Cycle

A two-step approach, targeting both the adult flea and the egg or larval flea forms, provides the most rapid control and the least resistance to flea control agents in future flea generations.

Year-round Flea Control

Fleas are also adaptive and the temperature controls how fast the flea completes its lifecycle. If you want to eradicate the flea population in a specific home, it is best to attack when numbers are low in the winter. Stopping flea control products in the winter may make it much harder to gain the upper hand in the spring and summer when the populations are rising.

Rotate Flea Products

Over time, only fleas resistant to an insecticide will survive. Periodically switching to another type of insecticide can be part of an effective flea control program to help reduce developing resistant fleas.

Sadly, fleas are here to stay one way or the other. Know as much about this pest as you do about the dogs and cats that it feeds upon. You cannot know too much when it comes to [flea control!](#)

Litter Box Care Guidelines

Kelly A. St. Denis, DVM, MS, DABVP

Date Published: 04/07/2016

House-soiling, inappropriate urination/defecation, spraying. A cat's use of locations other than the litter box comes under many names. Why do our cats do this?

First and foremost, it is critical to ensure that there is no medical component to the behavior. Urinary tract-related disease can lead to death in less than 48 hours. The diseases are painful and debilitating.

Consult your veterinarian IMMEDIATELY if house-soiling commences. Waiting to see what happens could mean the difference between life and death. Once your veterinarian assesses the cat for health problems, discussions about diets and behavioral problems can follow. Many times, your veterinarian will identify multiple factors contributing to the problem, including medical, diet and behavioral problems. They are here to work with you and your cat to resolve these concerns.

Litter-Box Care

Location Location Location

Provide more than one location in the household for litter boxes. Consider having one on each floor if space allows. Avoid moving boxes around.

Depth Matters

Experiment with different depths of litter. Most cats prefer 1-1.5 inch depth while others may prefer deeper litter. Add a new litter box if attempting to try different litter depths (or types). Try not to alternate the litter depth or type within existing litter boxes. Take note of which litter boxes get used the most and choose that depth of litter for the majority of the boxes.

Negative Associations

Keep litter boxes away from rooms that contain noisy equipment such as furnaces or washing machines. The noises may frighten the cat. Avoid administering medications or doing anything unpleasant to your cat while they are in the litter box or litter box area.

Don't Soil Where You Eat

Keep food and water dishes in a separate room or more than 5 feet away from the litter boxes. Cats are fastidious by nature and do not favor a soiled box. In the wild, they have endless location options in which to do their business. How can we expect them to walk in a pile of old feces and urine clumps?

Litter-Box Criteria

Feline behavior specialists have comprised a list of litter-box criteria based on studies demonstrating what is preferable for cats.

Number of Boxes

Provide one litter box per household cat PLUS one additional box. For example, a household with three cats should have four litter boxes.

Scented or Unscented

Use unscented clumping litter. Most cats prefer this texture best next to sandbox sand. Scented litters can be unpleasant and even painful to cats, since their sense of smell is significantly more sensitive than a human's.

Clay Versus Other

While some cats will tolerate some of the newer 'natural' types of litters (corn, wheat, etc.), they are generally not preferred and will not be tolerated in instances where the cat is unwell or experiencing anxiety/stress.

Size Matters

Provide large size litter boxes that the cats are comfortable moving around in. Some older, arthritic cats may prefer boxes with LOW walls or a low door cut in the box. Climbing over the high walls may be painful.

Keep it Open

Remove covers from most or all of the litter boxes. Most cats do not feel comfortable in a covered box.

Keep it Clean

Scoop litter once to twice daily. More often is best. Empty out the litter tray once every one to two weeks. Clean the litter box with a mild detergent, rinse well, and dry well before adding new litter.

Pet Insurance Fact Sheet

Frances Wilkerson, DVM

Date Published: 08/14/2010 Date Reviewed/Revised: 03/22/2018

What is Pet Insurance?

Pet insurance or pet health insurance helps cover the cost of medical expenses should your pet become ill or have an accident.

Some pet insurance companies also offer routine and wellness coverage (vaccinations, annual wellness exams, spaying/neutering, heartworm testing/medications, etc) for an additional fee.

What is the Best Way to Use Pet Insurance?

Pet insurance is best used for unexpected, catastrophic medical events that are difficult to budget for.

Routine and wellness procedures are not always best handled with pet insurance. Sometimes the annual cost of adding routine and wellness care to your plan ends up being more than it would cost you if you paid for these procedures out of your own pocket, so make sure you do the math before you buy.

It is possible that you will pay more in premiums than you get back if your pet stays relatively healthy, therefore pet insurance (like any other insurance) should be used as a risk management tool, not as a way to save money.

How does Pet Insurance Work?

Pet insurance is similar to human health insurance in that it:

- Has premiums, deductibles, co-pays and maximum payouts.
- Has waiting periods that define when coverage starts. Companies can also have different waiting periods for different medical conditions.

Pet insurance differs from human health insurance in that:

- It does not cover pre-existing conditions.
- It is a reimbursement program. This means you pay the vet bill, and then you file the claim with the pet insurance company for reimbursement. It is very different from human medical insurance where the doctor files the claim and receives the payment directly from the insurance company. This means you will have to have some means to pay the

veterinary bill while you wait for reimbursement.

- Pet insurance companies do not use networks. You are able to visit any licensed veterinarian in the U.S. Some plans also allow you to visit a licensed veterinarian in another country while traveling.

How to Select a Pet Insurance Plan

Selecting a pet insurance plan is an individual choice because each person has different needs depending on the pet's breed, owner's geographical location and the owner's budget.

First, determine if you need pet insurance. If you can cover the worst case scenario costs for your geographic location out of your own pocket, then you may not need pet insurance.

If you determine that you need pet insurance, make sure the pet insurance company you choose has the following attributes:

1. Has good medical coverage
To get the most comprehensive coverage, you want to purchase a plan that covers accidents/injuries AND illnesses. The illness part of the coverage must include (these are common ailments in veterinary medicine):
 - a) Coverage for cancer
 - b) Coverage for chronic disease
Chronic diseases are illnesses that have long duration and generally slow progression. Examples include cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and feline immunodeficiency virus.
 - c) Continual coverage for chronic disease
 - If you do not get this coverage, the chronic disease will only be covered in the policy year it was diagnosed, and after that you will have to pay for any continuing medications or diagnostic monitoring yourself. To further this point, you will pay the same monthly premium even though you have lost coverage for the disease.
 - Treatment for most chronic diseases will last beyond the first year of diagnosis, therefore it is important to have coverage in this area.
 - d) Coverage for hereditary and congenital diseases.
 - e) Coverage for diseases that are common to your pet's breed.
2. Has a good reputation.
Research a pet insurance company's reputation using the Better Business Bureau and your state's department of insurance.
3. Has a strong underwriter.
The underwriter is the company that is financially responsible for paying your claim. Use [AM Best](#) to research the strength of the underwriter.

4. Has a maximum payout limit that will cover the worst case scenario costs for your geographic location.
The maximum payout limit is the maximum amount of money the insurance company will reimburse you. This payout limit can be annual, lifetime, per incident, per body system, or based on a predetermined benefit schedule. You want to pick a maximum payout structure that will cover the worst case scenario costs.
5. Has an affordable premium.
6. Pays claims in a timely fashion.
7. Does not have unreasonable exclusions and requirements.
 - Exclusions are medical conditions that are not covered by the plan.
 - Requirements are things you must do to remain insured (e.g. annual exams, animal must reside in the place of residence listed on the policy, submission of medical records, and adherence to the vaccination recommendations).
 - Exclusions and requirements are written in the pet insurance company's terms and conditions. It is important that you read this document before and after you buy so that there are no surprises.

What about Accident Only Policies?

As the name implies, accident only policies cover accidents only. They do not cover medical costs caused by illnesses.

Accident only policies tend to be much cheaper than comprehensive accident and illness policies because they do not cover costly illnesses.

Also, as a pet ages, the number of accident-related injuries decreases in comparison to the number of illness-related conditions.

In addition, what a pet owner considers to be an accident is not necessarily what a pet insurance company considers to be one. For example, some companies will not cover conditions such as foreign body ingestion or cruciate injuries in their accident only policies.

If you intend to buy an accident only policy, make sure you know what you are getting for your money.

Key Points Regarding Pet Insurance

- Never buy pet insurance without doing your own research.
- Do not pick pet insurance solely based on the cost of the premium. Make sure you consider the monetary and medical coverage it provides.

- Read the terms and conditions of the pet insurance plan. Make sure you understand all the exclusions and requirements in the policy.
- Ask the company for a list of exclusions based on your pet's past medical history and breed.
Usually you have to purchase the policy first to receive this type of review and you will have to submit medical records. Also, not all pet insurance companies offer this option, but if they do it will give you a list of the exclusions you can expect based on your pet's prior history. If you don't like what is on this list, you can cancel the policy within the money back guarantee period.
- Do not wait until your pet has an illness or injury before you buy pet insurance as it will be considered a pre-existing condition and will not be covered by your policy.
- Know which states are covered by the plan.
- Not all pet insurance companies are licensed to sell insurance in all states. Therefore, before buying a pet insurance plan make sure the company sells plans in your state and any state you may be thinking of moving to. Also, make sure the coverage will be the same in the new state.
- If you have to switch pet insurance companies, any medical conditions your pet had under the old company may be considered pre-existing by the new company.
- Know the enrollment age range of the plan.
This is the age your pet must be to sign up for a new policy. There is usually a low end and a high end. There can be one range for dogs and one range for cats. There can also be ranges for certain breeds.
- Make sure you ask the company how and when your premium can increase.
- Make sure you understand what the company's waiting periods are as it will vary from company to company.
- Make sure you understand the company's pre-existing conditions policy as it will vary from company to company.
- Make sure you understand the company's bilateral conditions policy.
- A bilateral condition is any condition that can happen on both sides of the body. Some companies have restrictions on how much they will cover for these types of conditions. Examples of bilateral conditions include, but are not limited to, hip dysplasia (could happen in both hips) and cruciate injuries (could happen in both knees).

- Pet insurance companies are businesses.
 - As businesses, one of their top priorities is to make a profit. They can and may change your rates and terms to meet that top priority. A change of business ownership or underwriters can also be a catalyst for changes in your rates and terms.

When you purchase pet insurance, make sure you have a realistic understanding of this and how it can affect you.

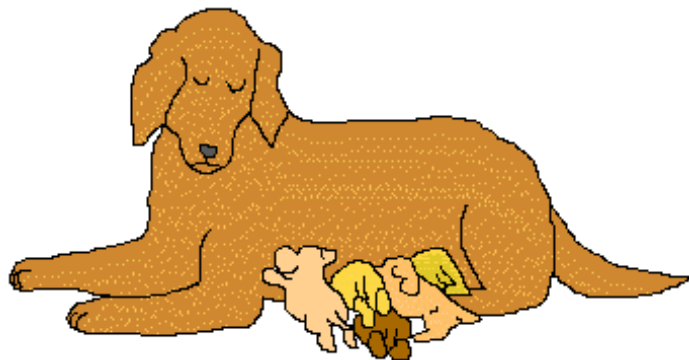
Vaccine Information for Dogs, Cats, Puppies and Kittens

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Why Do Baby Animals Need a Series of Shots and How Many do They Need?

When a baby kitten or puppy is born, its immune system is not yet mature; the baby is wide open for infection. Fortunately, nature has a system of protection. The mother produces a certain kind of milk in the first few days after giving birth. This milk is called colostrum and is rich in all the antibodies that the mother has to offer. As the babies drink this milk, they will be taking in their mother's immunity. After the first couple of days, regular milk is produced and the baby's



intestines undergo what is called closure, which means they are no longer able to take externally produced antibodies into their systems. These first two days are critical to determining what kind of immunity the baby will receive until its own system can take over.

How long this maternal antibody lasts in a given puppy or kitten is totally individual. It can depend on the birth order of the babies, how well they nursed, and a number of other factors. Maternal antibodies against different diseases wear off after different times. We DO know that by 14-20 weeks of age, maternal antibodies are gone, and the baby must be able to continue on its own immune system.

While maternal immunity is in the puppy's system, any vaccines given will be inactivated. Vaccines will not be able to "take" until maternal antibody has sufficiently dropped. Puppies and kittens receive a series of vaccines ending at a time when we know the baby's own immune system should be able to respond. We could simply wait until the baby is old enough to definitely respond, as we do with the rabies vaccination, but this could leave a large window of vulnerability if the maternal antibody wanes early. To give babies the best chance of responding to vaccination, we vaccinate intermittently (usually every 2-4 weeks) during this period, in hope of gaining some early protection.

When a vaccine against a specific disease is started for the first time, even in an adult animal, it is best to give at least two vaccinations. This is because the second vaccination will produce a much greater (logarithmically greater) response if it is following a vaccine given 2-4 weeks prior.

If a Vaccine Lasts a Person for their Whole Life, Why do I Have to Vaccinate my Pet Annually?

In the U.S., vaccines are licensed based on the minimum duration they can be expected to last. It is expensive to test vaccines across an expanse of years, so this is not generally done. If a vaccine is licensed by the USDA for annual use, this means it has been tested and found to be protective to at least 80% of the vaccinated animals a year after they have been vaccinated. Some vaccines are licensed for use every three years and have been tested similarly. Do these vaccines last a lifetime? We cannot say that they do without testing and this kind of testing has yet to be performed.

It is also important to realize that some diseases can be prevented through vaccination while others do not. For a vaccine to generate solid long-lasting immunity, the infection must be fairly generalized to the entire body (such as [feline distemper](#) or [canine parvovirus](#)) rather than localized to one organ system (such as [kennel cough](#) or [feline upper respiratory viruses](#)). Vaccination for localized infections tends to require more frequent boosting, whereas there is potential for vaccination for systemic disease to last for many years.

Since the mid-1990s most veterinary teaching hospitals have restructured their vaccination policies to increase the duration of some vaccines from one year to three years based on independent studies rather than on the studies used by the USDA for vaccine licensing. The American Association of Feline Practitioners has [vaccination guidelines for cats living in different exposure situations](#), and the American Animal Hospital Association has [guidelines for dogs](#).

It is important to realize that these are just guidelines and different regions and different pet lifestyles will justify modifications. For example, Leptospirosis vaccination is generally considered "non-core," but the Los Angeles County Health Dept has recommended that it be considered "core" for Los Angeles County after the substantial 2021 outbreak.

What Do I Do if My Pet Skips a Year of Vaccination?

It depends on the vaccine and the hospital. Hospitals are likely to have different recommendations as vaccination policy tends to be individualized to the practice and its geographic location. At some hospitals, recommendations for adult animals who skip an annual vaccine include:

- **Feline distemper** (or feline panleukopenia, FVRCP) - Vaccinate normally. It is not necessary to restart the initial series.
- **Feline leukemia (FeLV)** - If an adult cat has skipped an annual booster, it is not necessary to restart the initial series and vaccination can simply pick up where it left off.
- **Rabies** - A three-year vaccine can be given any time after the initial one-year vaccine. This means that if a year is skipped, the next rabies vaccine given will still be a three-year vaccine. One-year vaccines can be boosted at any time and will be good for one year from the time they are given.

What Vaccines Should I Get for my Pet?

What vaccines are recommended to an individual pet depends on many factors: what kind of exposure to disease the animal has, what diseases are common in the area, what kind of stress factors are present, etc. When you consider the multitudes of vaccine types and combinations and the many different situations dogs and cats live in, it is not too surprising to find that almost every veterinarian recommends a different group of vaccines. The best advice is to establish a relationship with a veterinary facility that you trust and go with their recommendation.

What Vaccines Should I Get if my Pet is Indoors Almost Completely?

Both the [American Association of Feline Practitioners](#) and the [American Animal Hospital Association](#) have published guidelines for vaccination. Vaccinations are divided into “core” vaccines that every pet should have, and “non-core” vaccines that a pet should have depending on exposure risk.

For cats, core vaccines are the basic distemper shot: [feline distemper \(panleukopenia\)](#), feline herpes, and feline calicivirus. Rabies vaccination is core except in Hawaii where rabies has been eradicated. Many people are surprised that rabies is often considered a core vaccine and is considered important even for indoor-only cats, but when one considers the consequences of rabies exposure (which can certainly happen indoors) and the legal consequences of owning a biting animal (what happens to the animal generally is dependent on its vaccine status), it is not hard to see why this vaccine is important. The feline advisory board does not consider feline leukemia virus vaccination to be core, but they strongly encourage every kitten to be vaccinated against this infection with a re-assessment of risk factors when the kitten is grown. This is because young kittens frequently live indoors only, but this often changes when the kitten matures regardless of the original intentions of the owner.

For dogs, core vaccines are the basic distemper shot (DHPP) and the rabies vaccine. Since dogs go outside for walks, for grooming, to the vet's office, etc., we recommend vaccinating against [kennel cough](#) for all our canine patients though these are not listed as "core" by the aforementioned organizations. Recently, [canine influenza](#) has become a concern in the United States. Dogs that rarely contact other dogs probably do not need vaccination for this but dogs that go to daycare, grooming, or boarding facilities should be vaccinated.

What is the Difference Between a Live and a Killed Vaccine?

These terms apply to vaccines against viruses.

The goal of vaccination is to give the virus in question to the patient's immune system in as natural a way as possible; the hope is to best mimic the stimulation obtained by natural infection yet skip the illness.



There are two ways to achieve this goal. One way is to use a killed vaccine. Here, large amounts of dead virus are injected into the patient. They filter into the immune system and lead to stimulation. The other way is to use a live virus that has been modified such that the actual disease does not result in infection. The live vaccine is able to travel through the body in the same sequence as the naturally occurring virus would, creating immune stimulation in the same way the street virus would. An immunity

similar to that created by a real infection is produced.

In general, the live virus vaccine is preferred as the most thorough immune stimulation will occur with it, but there are some circumstances where killed is better. A killed virus vaccine can never revert to virulence, which means there are no circumstances under which the vaccine can produce the disease it is trying to prevent. If the virus in question is particularly deadly (such as rabies), it is not worth taking any chances with a live virus vaccine even for superior immunity.

What is a Recombinant Vaccine and is it Really Better than the other Available Vaccine Types?

Recombinant vaccines represent the cutting-edge of vaccine technology in both veterinary and human medicine. For generations, we classified vaccines as either "killed" or "modified live" (see above). With the advent of genetic engineering, there are now new vaccines that do not fit

this classification: the recombinant vaccines. While the USDA recognizes four categories of recombinant vaccines, only the "Vectored Virus" Category is commercially available for pets.

With vectored virus vaccines, the viral DNA responsible for stimulating the patient's immune system is cloned into a harmless live virus. The harmless virus is injected into the patient where it travels innocuously within the body, stimulating the patient's immune system to respond to the cloned viral DNA. In this way, the benefits of a live vaccine can be realized for a virus that is normally considered too dangerous for a modified live vaccine. Presently, recombinant vaccines are available for feline rabies, feline leukemia, Lyme disease, and canine distemper.

So are these vaccines better than the traditional ones? The chief benefit seems to be fewer vaccine reactions since there are fewer extraneous proteins to cause unnecessary immune stimulation when compared to killed virus vaccines. Since the virus used in recombinant vaccines is alive, there is no potentially harmful adjuvant included in the product (see below). There is also a zero chance of the vaccine virus reverting to virulence and causing infection.

Why do Vaccinated Pets still get Sick?

There are several reasons why a pet might get sick from a disease it is vaccinated against. Not every pet is able to respond to vaccination due to inherent individual immunological issues. Some vaccines are not intended to prevent infection but are intended to blunt the symptoms of the disease should infection occur, as with the feline upper respiratory infections.

In most cases, the pet got sick because of incomplete vaccination. This situation generally involves a puppy that did not finish its puppy series of shots or got exposed to infection before the shot series could be completed. True vaccination breaks are extremely rare but if you think your pet may have experienced one, your veterinarian will need to issue a report to the manufacturer.

Can a Pregnant Pet Be Vaccinated?

It is important that live vaccines (see above) NOT be used in pregnant pets. This is because a "modified" virus that will not cause illness in the mother may still be strong enough to infect the unborn puppies or kittens. Killed vaccines may be given during pregnancy though, as a general rule, it is best not to give any medical treatments during pregnancy if it can be avoided. While giving killed vaccines is commonly done in large animals and food animals, it is not routine for dogs or cats.

What is an Adjuvant?

An adjuvant is a material added to a killed vaccine to assist in generating immunity. When a killed vaccine is injected, the body recognizes a foreign substance and begins to break it down and remove it. If this process happens too quickly, the viral proteins will not be present long enough to generate an immunological response. Adjuvants help hold the killed virus in place and stabilize it so that its presence can be prolonged and provide a more complete stimulation of the patient's immune system.

Adjuvants have become controversial in cats especially and may be associated with [tumor \(especially fibrosarcoma\)](#) formation. It appears to be desirable to avoid the use of adjuvanted vaccines in cats. Neither modified live nor recombinant vaccines use adjuvants.

Why is a Feline Leukemia Test Required Prior to Vaccination?

The feline leukemia virus has the potential to be latent in a carrier cat without any signs of illness, and this carrier state can persist for years. During this time, the cat is contagious and at risk for numerous problems. Many people want to skip the test to save money but, in fact, it is of great importance to know if a cat is harboring this infection. Knowing that a cat is positive allows you to save money by not unnecessarily vaccinating for feline leukemia. Further, if an owner is aware of a cat's positive status, the pet can be kept away from other cats, thus preventing the spread of the disease. An owner can prepare financially for the expected treatments needed for this cat. Testing is important when a new pet cat is obtained.

What is a Vaccine Titer?

Antibody levels against certain infections can be measured in a patient's blood sample. These antibody levels are called titers.

The idea is to measure a titer and determine whether or not a patient is protected against the infection in question so that unnecessary vaccination can be avoided. There is some controversy associated with this procedure.

- Blood testing (titering) is frequently more expensive than simply getting the vaccines in question.
- Blood testing is only available for a few infections.
- Antibody levels are only a small piece of the protection puzzle and it may not be correct to say that a certain antibody level "equals" protection.
- Risks associated with giving vaccines to patients that are already protected are not clearly defined. Exactly what the risks are, or if there are risks at all, has not been determined.

Titering is available at many hospitals and if you are concerned about whether your pet is already protected, ask your veterinarian about it.

Can Vaccines Hurt my Pet?

Some muscle soreness, lethargy and mild fever persisting for a day or two are considered common (normal) reactions stimulating the immune system. Occasionally a firm swelling temporarily develops at a vaccine site, especially with killed vaccines. Vaccine reactions beyond this are unusual but possible. [Allergic reactions](#) characterized usually by facial swelling and hives are a strong sign that special care should be taken in administering vaccinations. Vomiting can be a sign of impending shock and should be taken seriously after vaccination. Since allergic reactions can potentially become worse with each episode, it is important to take heed of these signs as severe reactions can result in shock or even death.

Another reaction that has received tremendous press lately is vaccine-induced fibrosarcoma, a form of cancer in cats. See the next question.

Can Vaccines Cause Cancer?

Fibrosarcoma is an especially aggressive form of cancer that can affect cats spontaneously or by viral induction via the feline sarcoma virus. Recently, fibrosarcomas have been removed from areas of the body typically used for vaccination and, to the surprise of the veterinary profession, particles of aluminum-based vaccine ingredients (called adjuvants) were discovered within the tumor. The working theory is that [vaccination may induce this form of cancer](#) in rare cases (between 1 in 1,000 and 1 in 10,000 cats). The killed feline leukemia vaccine and the killed rabies vaccine have been implicated as being more likely to be involved. The problem is definitely not a matter of simply changing to non-aluminum-based adjuvants but is more complicated. A list of preventive measures has been issued by most veterinary associations.

Can Over-Vaccination Cause other Diseases?

As mentioned, in the mid-1990s recommendations for annual [canine distemper](#) and [feline distemper](#) vaccination shifted to every three years for these vaccines. The reason for this is not that annual vaccination was found to be harmful; it simply became accepted as unnecessary.

Many people have speculated that annual vaccination is responsible for cancer, immune-mediated diseases, kidney disease, and the most common ailments of senior dogs and cats. So far, there is no clear evidence that annual vaccination has increased the incidence of any specific health problems.

How Can I Have my Pets Vaccinated at a Low Cost?

Vaccination is an important part of a pet's health, and it should not be skipped. If cost is a problem, there are several approaches you can take, but each has advantages and disadvantages.

Option One: Omit the Examination and Choose Vaccination Only. Prices Vary from Veterinarian to Veterinarian

Some veterinarians are not comfortable administering vaccinations without completely examining the pet first. Others allow you the option of coming in for "vaccination only." Annual examination is recommended as part of basic care for any pet. The physical examination not only involves a professional assessment of the pet's condition but it is your opportunity to learn about what new products, technology, or services are available that you might otherwise never hear about. The importance of this cannot be over-emphasized, but if vaccinations are needed, they may not need to be given in conjunction with a complete examination. In some states, "vaccination only" is not an option or there may be restrictions.

Option Two: Vaccination Clinic

These clinics are springing up everywhere to provide streamlined "shots only" service. These clinics may be mobile (traveling monthly or weekly to your local feed or pet supply store) or may be located in your own regular veterinarian's office. Here are some tips on what to look for in a clinic:

- *Are they using disposable needles?* You do not want to have your pet experience a needle that has been dulled on a previous patient or possibly inadequately re-sterilized.
- *Is the clinic using the latest guidelines to avoid vaccine-induced fibrosarcomas?* This might be a good indicator of whether the clinic is up-to-date in its quality control. See more information on the prevention of vaccine-induced fibrosarcomas.
- *Do they seem simply interested in selling you the maximum number of vaccines or do they seem genuinely interested in informing you on which vaccines you do and do not need?* Many vaccine clinics pay their staff commission for the number of vaccines sold.
- *Is your regular veterinarian's office sponsoring the clinic?* If they are, this will solve a lot of confusion about keeping vaccine records straight at your vet's office and will avoid the confusion of getting vaccine recommendations from different veterinarians.
- *Are the vaccines already drawn up or are they mixed fresh while you are present?* Modified live vaccines are sensitive about storage, especially after they are reconstituted. A mobile clinic must contend with the inherent difficulties of refrigeration.

You do not want to use a vaccine that may have been reconstituted perhaps hours before.

Option Three: Vaccinating your Pets Yourself

It is physically possible to give vaccines yourself if you know how to give a subcutaneous injection. In many areas, pet vaccines are considered over-the-counter medications and you can get them from your local pharmacy or by mail order. *Most veterinarians do not recommend this practice for the following reasons:*

- It may be difficult for you to properly dispose of the needles. (In California, for example, it is illegal to dispose of needles in the regular trash.)
- If there is any type of acute allergic reaction, you will not be prepared to address it.
- In cats, there are specific guidelines regarding where vaccines should be placed. This makes the process trickier, especially with uncooperative cats. You may get bitten. It is also very important to know where to give each type of vaccine, as giving multiple vaccines in the same area causes increased inflammation, which can lead to [vaccine-site tumor formation](#).
- You may not have kept proper records of vaccination should proof of vaccination be needed. Facilities requiring proof of vaccination may be unwilling to accept your own word that your pet is vaccinated adequately.
- Modified live vaccines are somewhat sensitive to proper storage. They cannot be mixed up in advance and their components must be kept at the proper temperature. This may be difficult depending on how the vaccine is transported to your home.
- It is illegal for anyone but a veterinarian or licensed person to give a rabies vaccine.

If you are looking for a low-cost method of vaccination, consider a low-cost vaccination clinic rather than trying to give vaccines on your own.

Option Four: Pet Insurance

A pet insurance wellness plan will cover vaccination at least in part. Not all pet insurance companies offer wellness coverage, but many do with a great deal of variability in how vaccination is covered (some cover a straight percentage of your expense, some reimburse a specific amount for vaccination services, etc.) If you would like more information on how to choose a pet insurance plan, [click here](#).