

Congratulations – you have a new kitten!

You've anticipated the new arrival by 'kitten proofing' your home and had lots of fun choosing the carrier, bed, blanket, toys and other supplies they will need. This adorable little bundle of fluff is sure to bring you much joy. In return, you can make a major contribution to your pet's longevity, happiness and quality of life by providing him/her with good nutrition, loving attention in a safe, clean environment and regular checkups at your veterinary practice.



Neutering your kitten

Many veterinary surgeons believe that spaying or neutering not only helps solve the serious problem of a burgeoning population of unwanted cats but also makes for friendlier, easier-to-live-with pets. Spayed female cats are more relaxed, playful and affectionate, while castrated males are calmer and less likely to 'spray' or urine-mark their territory, wander away from their home or fight. Plus, sterilisation has health benefits - it minimizes the risk of mammary cancer in females and reduces the incidence of prostate problems in males.

Spaying removes the uterus and ovaries of a female cat, usually around the age of six months. A major surgical procedure, it is performed under general anaesthesia. Complications are rare and recovery is normally complete within ten days.

Castration, also carried out under general anaesthesia, removes the testicles of a male cat. The small wounds that result usually heal in about a week. Less complicated than spaying, it is often performed when the cat is 6 to 12 months old.

Your kitten's basic health check



Your new kitten should visit a veterinary surgeon as soon as possible. The first visit will probably include:

- A thorough physical examination to determine his/her state of health.
- Check for parasites (fleas, ticks, lice, ear mites, worms).
- Initial vaccination and/or a discussion of the types of vaccinations your kitten needs and when they should be scheduled.
- Discussion about whether your kitten should be neutered and when.

This first health check will give your veterinary surgeon the information he/she needs to advise you on your kitten's immediate diet and care. Plus, it will create a "knowledge base" from which, on subsequent checkups throughout your cat's life, he/she can better evaluate, monitor and manage your pet's health.

Make your new kitten feel at home

With sensitive handling and friendly contact for at least an hour a day, your new kitten should soon be very comfortable with you and the new home. If there are young children in the home, make sure that they are taught that a kitten is not a toy but a living creature who must be treated with gentleness and respect. Also provide your pet with lots of opportunities for interesting, challenging play that will satisfy natural instincts. Toys that they can pretend to 'hunt' and capture and special posts that can be scratched (instead of your carpets and furniture) will help make your kitten a joy to live with.

Your Geriatric Cat

When is the best time to start caring for your ageing pet? When there are kitten. Starting off your cat's life with good nutrition, scheduled veterinary appointments and a happy home life sets the blueprint for a high quality of life in older years. Most cats are considered geriatric by the age of 8 to 10. Much like humans, time takes its toll on vital organ functions as your cat ages. Cats are more subtle than dogs in showing you when they are sick or in pain. Paying attention to your cat's behaviour will make detecting problems easier and help them live healthy lives well into their teens.

What you can do at home

- Check your cat's mouth, eyes or ears regularly. Watch for loose teeth, redness, swelling or discharge.
- Keep your pet's sleeping area clean and warm.
- Make fresh water available at all times.
- Maintain a regime of proper nutrition and loving attention.



How old is your cat?

If your cat is...	In human terms, that's
1 month	5-6 months
2 months	9-10 months
3 months	2-3 years
4 months	5-6 years
5 months	8-9 years
6 months	14 years
7 months	15 years
8 months	16 years
1 year	18 years

2 years	25 years
3 years	30 years
4 years	35 years
5 years	38-40 years
6 years	42-44 years
7 years	45 years
8 years	48 years
9 years	55 years
10 years	60 years
11 years	62 years
12 years	65 years
13 years	68 years
14 years	72 years
15 years	74 years
16 years	76 years
17 years	78 years

Common Problems

Obesity is a big health risk. An older cat is a less active cat, so adjustments to your pet's diet to reduce caloric intake are imperative. This will relieve pressure on the joints as well as manage the risks of heart failure, kidney or liver disease, digestive problems and more. Other changes to nutrition should include increasing fibre, fatty acids and vitamins while decreasing phosphorus, sodium, protein and fat.

Diabetes is common especially in older cats. It is a disease in which your cat's pancreas can no longer produce enough of the hormone insulin.

Arthritis severity can range from slight stiffness to debilitation. You may detect this problem when he/she becomes less attentive about grooming and litter box habits. These signs may also indicate the slowing down of cognitive functions. Anti-inflammatory medication can help relieve the pain. Your veterinary surgeon will prescribe any necessary medication.

Intolerance to hot and cold temperatures occurs because your cat produces less of the hormones which regulate the body's normal temperature. Move his/her bed closer to a heat source. Avoid letting outdoor cats out on cold days.

Tooth loss or decay not only makes it harder to chew but also increases the likelihood of infection or tumours. Cats are very sensitive to oral pain. Brushing and cleaning the teeth will keep tartar, gum disease and gingivitis at bay.

Constipation may point to colon problems or hairballs. A diet that is easily digestible and rich in nutrients is essential.

Skin or coat problems in ageing cats means the skin loses elasticity, making your pet more susceptible to injury while the coat's hair thins and dulls over time. Regular grooming to maintain the coat's lustre and fatty acid supplements are highly beneficial.

Frequent colds and infections may indicate an impaired immune system. Bring your cat in

for a check-up. Your veterinary surgeon may suggest a test for Feline Leukemia Virus and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus.

Increased thirst is a possible sign of diabetes, kidney failure or hyperthyroidism. Your veterinary surgeon will determine this and prescribe the appropriate medication.

Decreased sense of smell may drastically reduce your cat's appetite. Try serving smaller portions more often throughout the day. Ask your veterinary surgeon about foods formulated for geriatric cats.

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