



Canadian Animal Rescue & Extended Shelter (CARES)

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KITTEN CARE

(8 weeks to 8 months)

Congratulations on the adoption of your new family member! Kittens are fun and exciting but they also require a lot of dedication, commitment and patience. Here are some tips to help you care for your new companion.

Food

Food bowls should always be clean and made of ceramic, stainless steel or glass, **not plastic**. Kittens should be given a small amount (approx. 3 tablespoons) of canned food three times a day and dry food should be provided at all times. As they get bigger and depending on the activity level of the cat, you will need to decrease the amount of canned food offered. Their main diet should be a balance of wet and dry kitten food until approximately 8 months of age.

Which is best for your cat – canned or dry food? Many vets are now recommending a balanced diet of both wet and dry food. If your cat's diet consists solely of dry food, you're really doing your pet a disservice. While it's fine to supplement a wet food diet with dry food occasionally when you'll be away from home, quality wet foods should really make up the bulk of your cat's menu.

Advantages of wet cat food:

- **Higher water content** – Obviously, wet cat food is.....wet. In the wild, cats actually get most of their needed water from the prey they catch and eat. In this manner, wet food mimics a cat's natural diet.
- **Less carbohydrates** – Cats are true carnivores and have no need for carbohydrates in their diet. While there are definite exceptions, especially in some of the cheaper canned food brands, wet cat food tends to have far fewer carbohydrates than dry food, making it a more natural choice.
- **Proper servings** – Since wet cat food will go bad if left unrefrigerated too long, most of us are more likely to feed our cats the proper amount of wet food for any one meal. With dry food, it's far too easy to just leave it out all the time and this could lead to obesity, particularly in older, less active cats.
- **Closer to natural diet** – Assuming the wet food has the proper nutrients, it is much more similar to the type of food that a cat would normally catch and consume in the wild.

Important Note - Along with foods that are toxic to a cat such as garlic, onion, chocolate, etc., kittens and cats **should not** be given milk at any time as it is difficult for them to digest. Water should be provided at all times. Try an ice cube in their water dish on hot summer days to encourage them to drink. Change the water in the morning and then again in the evening.

Litter Box

Purchase an adult size box. Your new kitten will grow very quickly and you won't have to replace it. Two cats may use the same box but if you have 3 or more, they should each have their own box. Use non-clumping litter only for kittens until they are approximately 6 months old. You may then change to clumping if you wish. (See the shopping list for other options.) Scoop the litter 2-3 times or a day. Clean the litter box with soap, water and a little enzyme cleaner such as Nature's Miracle and replace litter every 4 to 6 days if non-clumping.

If a kitten should ever have an "accident", **NEVER** rub his nose in it. This is very unhealthy as his sinuses could become infected. This practice will also teach him to fear people. Instead, gently pick up your kitten and put him in the litter box. The only time a kitten will not use his litter box is when he can't find it, it hasn't been cleaned, if another cat is antagonizing him or if he needs medical help.

Scratching Posts

Scratching posts are an absolute **must**. Purchase or make one right away! Kittens love to climb, so if you have the space, purchase a tall scratching post. When your kitten starts to scratch something other than his scratching post, say "**NO**" in a firm voice and gently pick him up and place him on his scratching post and praise him when he uses it. Trimming his nails will also help.

Nail Trimming

NEVER declaw a cat! It is cruel, painful and completely unnecessary. To trim a kitten's nails it helps to wrap him securely in a towel. Trim nails taking care not to trim the "quick" (the light pink part of the nail). The nerve endings are here and need to be avoided. Nails should be trimmed approximately every two weeks. Human nail clippers (sharp ones) are fine to use.

Toys

Never use your hand as a toy for your kitten. It will teach him to scratch and bite. Always have a toy when you are playing with him. Kittens prefer soft toys. They don't usually respond to catnip before approximately 7 months of age.

Vaccines

Kittens should receive their first vaccinations at 8 weeks of age and an additional booster a month after the first shot. If the booster shot is not done the first shot will not be effective. As you are adopting your kitten through C.A.R.E.S all vaccinations have been completed. Speak with your vet regarding a yearly or two year vaccination program.

Spay / Neuter

Kittens adopted from C.A.R.E.S. have already been spayed or neutered; most vets will do these procedures once the kitten reaches 2.5 pounds or once the males' testes have dropped.

Harness Training

It is possible to train your kitten to be on a harness in order to go outside with you. At the age of 4 months put a harness on and let him get used to it while walking around the house. Over time, try him on a leash in your back yard. Do not leave him tied anywhere unattended.

How to kitten/cat proof your home plus other miscellaneous tips

Cats are curious critters and once you bring your cat home, they will want to explore every inch of your house. Like a small child, your cat will get into things it shouldn't unless you keep potentially harmful objects out of reach. Like child-proofing for a toddler, cat-proofing your home is vital to your cat's safety and well being.

- Kittens should be supervised and should not have the run of the house while you are away.
- Small children should be supervised and taught how to gently touch and play with a kitten.
- Be careful when opening an outside door. It is a good habit to pick up your kitten when a door is being opened.
- Socialize your kitten by exposing him to people and if possible, other cats. Do not expose him to animals that will not welcome him.

Household Hazards

- **Furniture.** Certain types of furniture are potentially dangerous for cats. Reclining chairs can trap a cat that crawls inside, so check for your cat's presence under the leg rest or inside the recliner before returning it to an upright position. Rocking chairs can roll on a cat's tail or foot, so make sure your cat isn't sitting near the rocker when you decide to take a break. Kittens and cats like to climb so it is recommended that you purchase one or two tall multi-level scratching posts so you can teach the kitten to use the post instead of the furniture.
- **Ironing boards.** Irons left standing can topple over and injure your cat, so put them away when you are finished. Don't leave hot irons unattended.
- **Clothes washers & dryers.** Because cats love to snuggle in small, warm spaces, they often crawl into clothes dryers if the dryer door is left open. Many cats have perished when their owners turned the dryer on without realizing the cat was inside. Close the dryer door after you remove a load of clothing to keep your cat from taking a nap in a potentially dangerous location.
- **Electrical cords.** To keep your cat from accidentally getting electrocuted by chewing through wires, tie up loose electrical cords or conceal them in hard plastic or rubber runners purchased at the hardware store. If your cat hogs the heat from heating vents in the winter, fit the cat with an elastic or break-away collar so she can pull away if her identification tags become caught in the grate.
- **Small objects.** Small objects, such as coins, pins, needles, rubber bands, paper clips, staples, nails, screws, yarn, thread, dental floss, earrings and other small jewelry, bells and small balls, left lying around can lodge in your cat's digestive tract if swallowed. Keep them safely out of your cat's reach.

- **Windows/Blinds.** To keep your cat from accidentally falling or escaping through an open window, fasten window screens securely. Keep the cords from window blinds up high and away from little paws. Little kittens can be accidently hanged by playing and getting tangled with the cords.
- **Toilets.** The toilet can be a popular watering hole for a cat. A small kitten could fall in and drown or a cat could become poisoned if the toilet contains an automatic toilet bowl cleaner. Keeping the toilet lid down may prevent a feline tragedy.

Potential Poisons

- **Plants.** Many common household plants are poisonous to cats. They range from lily-of-the-valley and daffodils to rhododendron and hydrangea. Eating them will cause symptoms ranging from stomach upset to convulsions or death. Check the internet for more information about other poisonous plants.
- If your cat enjoys eating greens, try supplying it with a pot of oat grass to satisfy their cravings.
- **Chemicals.** Chemical cleaning products are poisonous if your cat ingests them. If using chemical cleaners concerns you, substitute safe cleaning products such as vinegar/water mixtures or baking soda. Cats are fastidious, so if you do use chemical cleaning products, wash away the residue so your cat will not get it on her feet or hair. To keep your cat from opening the cupboards where you store cleaning products, attach safety latches to the cupboard doors. This would also apply to garden pest products.
- **Ovens.** When cleaning the oven, close the door to prevent your cat from walking on the chemical oven cleaner. Also after removing your latest culinary creations from the oven, be sure to close the hot oven door to keep your cat from burning its paws if it jumps on it.
- **Antifreeze.** All antifreeze is poisonous to cats. Even antifreeze made of propylene glycol is toxic if your cat ingests enough of it, so keep antifreeze spills cleaned up.
- **Drugs.** Common anti-inflammatory drugs such as aspirin and ibuprofen are extremely toxic to cats as well as analgesics such as acetaminophen (Tylenol). If your cat ingests only two regular strength Tylenol tablets within a 24-hour period, it may be lethal. Keep all medicines out of your cat's reach and don't let your cat play with pills that might have fallen to the floor. Pick them up and throw them away.

No house is 100 percent safe, but you can reduce the risk to your cat and create a cat-friendly environment by vigilantly keeping potential hazards at a minimum.