



Kitten Care

8 Weeks to 7 Months

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 (approximately 2-3 tsp.) of canned food three times a day and dry food should be provided at all times. As they get bigger, you may wish to decrease the amount of canned food until they are just eating dry food. Canned food may be given in small amounts once a day or even as a treat. Their main diet should be dry food from 5 to 6 months onward. Kittens/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.

Recommended kitten foods are Royal Canin, Eukanuba, Iams (dry food and canned food), Technical (dry and canned) and Medical (obtained from vet). Kittens should be fed kitten food until approximately 9 to 12 months of age.

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 cats they should each have their own box. Use **non-clumping litter only** for kittens until they are approximately 7 months old. You may then change to clumping if you wish. Scoop the litter 2-3 times a day. Clean the litter box with soap, water and a little bleach and replace litter every 4 to 6 days.

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 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 won't respond to catnip before about 7 months of age.

Vaccines: Your kitten needs his first shot at eight weeks old and it is necessary to have an additional booster shot a month after the first shot. If the booster shot is not done the first shot will not be effective.

Spay / Neuter: Ensure your kitten is spayed or neutered by 5-6 months of age. If you adopt a male and a female kitten together, take them in at the same time at 5 months old, no later. A female kitten can become pregnant as young as 5 months old.

Miscellaneous Tips:

Kittens should be supervised and should not have the run of the house while you are away.

Before starting a washer or dryer, please make sure you know where your kitten is.

Keep all toilet lids closed.

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.

by Carol C. Adoption Volunteer