

# I Have a New Kitten



**C**ongratulations on your new kitten! Kittens are a source of fun and affection, and grow up to be great companions. When you bring your kitten to us for their first check-up, we will answer all your questions about the best way to take care of the newest member of your family.

Our staff are trained to help you with these life decisions. We will also supply you with a free kitten pack. In the meanwhile, here are some suggestions to start off on the "right paw".

## Feeding

Your kitten will need two separate bowls; one for food and one for water. If you have more than one kitten, each should have a set of their own. Make sure there is always fresh water available, and ensure that the food bowl is always clean. We recommend a high quality food, like Hill's Science Diet Growth . Hill's Science Diet Growth has all the necessary nutrients for a growing kitten in a concentrated form, resulting in less faeces produced, with a less offensive smell. It also has high levels of DHA for brain and vision development.

## Toilet Training

Successful toilet training is essential for a well adjusted kitten. So a litter tray, cat litter and a scoop are essential.

Most kittens will take to using a litter tray easily. To reduce the chance of problems:

- Put the litter tray somewhere easily accessible, but with a bit of privacy and away from the regular eating place.
- Remove the wet litter and faeces from the tray once or twice daily. Cats don't like a dirty toilet any more than we do!
- Replace the litter and clean the litter tray with hot water once or twice a week.
- If you have more than one cat, the general rule is one litter tray per cat

## Vaccinations

Kittens need to be vaccinated to protect them from contagious diseases. Our standard vaccination protects against feline enteritis and two strains of cat flu. Kittens require a vaccination at 6 to 8 weeks of age, 12 weeks of age and again at 16 weeks. We recommend keeping your kitten indoors until fully vaccinated to prevent contact with infected cats. If you have another cat, you should ensure that their vaccinations are current.

There is also a vaccination which protects against feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV). This is a disease very similar to HIV in people. Your vet will discuss this vaccination with you when your kitten is checked over.



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## Worming

Your kitten needs to be wormed every two weeks until 12 weeks of age. Thereafter, every 3 months is ideal.

## Desexing

Unless you are a registered breeder, all cats must be desexed in accordance with local council by-laws. Desexed pets have less health problems, in comparison with their entire counterparts, and research has shown that they live longer. In addition, cats which have not been desexed are not as pleasant to live with. Entire male cats often spray urine inside the house, and entire female cats are very vocal when they are "in season". They are also much more likely to roam.

Desexing is best performed around 6 months of age.

## Keeping Your Kitten Safe

Cats do not need to be outdoors to live happy, healthy lives. There are many good reasons for keeping your kitten as an indoors cat. The most common cause of death in cats is traffic accidents. There are also other risks, including poisons, infections and injuries from fighting, and feline AIDS. Many cats will hunt and kill native wildlife and birds.

Keeping your cat inside will prevent many of these accidents from happening. A cat can happily live indoors if you make it fun. Make sure you supply suitable toys to play with. There are many commercial cat toys available these days, but most cats like to play with ping pong balls, scrunched up balls of paper and cardboard boxes. Avoid playing with string, as if swallowed, can cause severe damage to the intestines.

You can also make a cat enclosure so that your kitten is able to go outside in a controlled environment. This can be a straightforward DIY project, or commercial cat enclosures are available to buy.

If you want to let your kitten outdoors:

- Confine them inside until desexed
- Keep all vaccinations, worm and flea treatments up to date
- Vaccinate for feline AIDS
- Register your kitten with the local council from 3 months of age and attach the registration tag to the collar
- Have your kitten microchipped
- Keep your kitten inside at night and during extreme weather conditions.



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## Microchipping

Microchipping is a safe and permanent form of identification for your cat. Unlike collars and tags, microchips cannot be lost. The microchip is approximately the size of a grain of rice, and implanted between the shoulder blades by injection. All stray animals which present to the pound, animal shelter, or vet clinic are scanned for a microchip. If a microchip has been implanted, your cat can be quickly reunited with you. We generally implant microchips at the time of desexing, but it can also be performed during a normal consultation. It is now a council requirement that all dogs and cats are microchipped.

## Grooming and Coat Care

Kittens generally keep themselves clean, but grooming with a suitable brush or comb is important to prevent the hair from matting. If you have a shorthaired kitten, grooming once a week should be adequate. However, medium to long haired cats require daily grooming.

Look in your kitten's ears and mouth and touch the paws. It is even possible to clean their teeth! Regular grooming and handling means that your kitten will be happier when visiting the vet, and taking medications.

## Scratching posts

A scratching post is a must if you have a cat! Cats love to scratch, since it is used to mark their territory. It also helps to keep their claws in proper condition and stretches their muscles. If a suitable scratching post is not provided for your kitten, there is no doubt that a substitute will be found, which will probably be your furniture.

A scratching post should be constructed from carpet or coiled rope, and it should be tall enough so that your kitten can scratch the post at full length. Make sure the post is sturdy enough so it doesn't tip over. Introduce your kitten to the post, and if not quite sure what to do with it, you can gently put their paws on the post, to mark their scent on it. Your kitten will be more likely to return there to scratch in the future.



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## Kitten-proofing your house

Kittens are naturally curious, and therefore can get into a lot of trouble in a normal household. Make sure all chemicals or poisons are kept in a tightly secured container in a cupboard that is not accessible to children or pets.

- Keep the toilet lid down and ensure that bathtubs are emptied after use.
- Keep plastic bags away to prevent suffocation or strangling. Cats love bags, especially ones which make noises.
- Keep miscellaneous household items, like rubber bands, string, twist ties, sewing kits away.
- Secure electrical cords and install a safety switch to prevent electrocution.

There are also many plants which are toxic to cats. These include lilies, azaleas, daffodils, foxglove, hydrangeas, poinsettias and cyclamen. For a more complete list, go to

[www.veterinarypartner.com/Content.plx?P=A&S=0&C=0&A=191](http://www.veterinarypartner.com/Content.plx?P=A&S=0&C=0&A=191)

## Registration

Your kitten needs to be registered with the local council from 3 months of age. Registration forms are available at the council offices.



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