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# Cat Care (Quickstudy: Home)

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## Quick Study HOME Cat Care


Optimize the health and longevity of your feline friend.

### Housing | Indoor is Best

- Plan on making your cat an indoor cat.
- Cats left outdoors are subject to a multitude of health hazards.
  - Trauma from cars, dogs and squabbling with other cats.
  - Increased exposure potential to infectious diseases, such as the feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) and feline leukemia, from interaction with stray cats.
  - Increased exposure potential to poisons and environmental toxins.
- Outdoor cats also have a greater chance of contracting diseases that are hazardous to people, such as rabies and certain types of intestinal parasites.
- If you must allow your cat to go outside, do so only during daylight hours, as most dangers are encountered at night.

### Physical Examinations

- Should be performed by a qualified veterinarian at least once a year for cats 8 years of age and younger every 6 months for cats over 8 years of age.
- Monthly mini-exams performed at home are useful for the early detection of diseases and disorders that may arise between visits to your veterinarian.



### Nutrition | What to Feed

- Sound nutrition leads to strong immune systems, high energy levels and healthy cats.**
- Cats have unique nutritional needs.
  - Diets should include elevated amounts of high quality protein.
  - Taurine, an essential amino acid, is required in sufficient amounts in the diet to prevent heart disease. Most commercial foods today meet this requirement.
- Commercial cat foods** come in moist, semi-moist and dry varieties.
  - Dry foods** usually cost less per unit of measurement and have longer shelf lives.
  - Moist and semi-moist foods** are more palatable, aromatic and easier to chew.
- May be preferred by older cats suffering from periodontal disease and experiencing declines in sensory taste and smell.
- Useful for weaning kittens less than 8 weeks of age.
- Cats with chronic urinary tract disease may benefit from the increased moisture in the diet.
- If moist food is fed, discard any uneaten portions within 2 hours.
- Follow the manufacturer's label recommendation concerning **daily feeding amounts**.
- For kittens under 8 months of age, feed twice a day.
- Other kittens and adult cats can be fed once daily or free-choice.
  - If your pet cat is kept free of intestinal parasites, an obese cat rob your cat of vital daily nutrients.
  - Many excellent diets are commercially available; ask your veterinarian for a brand recommendation.
  - Select a ration that is most nutritionally complete and balanced for your cat's particular stage of life, health status and activity level.
    - Kittens** (less than 12 months of age) need rations that are higher in nutrients than most adult rations to ensure proper growth and musculoskeletal development. There are many foods specifically labeled for kittens that will provide this extra nutrition.
    - Active cats** require more calories than sedentary cats.
    - Pregnant and lactating cats should be fed kitten food to provide increased levels of nutrients and energy.
    - Cats over 8 years of age** should be fed rations lower in calories and higher in fiber than standard adult cat foods to promote weight control and gastrointestinal motility. There are many foods specifically labeled for senior cats that will meet these criteria.
    - Felines suffering from heart disease or kidney disease** will need diets low in sodium. These are available from veterinarians.
      - For cats predisposed to **cytitis** and other urinary challenges, feed a ration that is low in magnesium and ash.
        - Cytitis, characterized by crystal formation, is a life-threatening disease in male cats due to urinary tract obstruction.
        - Diets low in magnesium and ash discourage crystal formation.
        - Many diets are now available in forms that promote urinary tract health. These are also available from your veterinarian.
      - Cats suffering from **upper respiratory infections** require diets with strong aromas to accommodate for a decreased sense of smell. Moist foods are usually more available than dry foods.
        - If a **change in diet** is ever necessary, wean your cat onto the new food over several weeks.
          - Prevents gastrointestinal upset secondary to ingredient changes.
          - Blend the new ration with the old ration, gradually increasing the percentage of new ration fed each day.
        - Keep **fresh water** accessible at all times.
          - Fountain or bottled water is best.
          - Change the water daily.
          - Clean food and water bowls at least once a week.
        - If your cat ever loses its appetite and stops eating for more than 3 days, contact your veterinarian immediately.
          - Loss of appetite can be caused by finicky eating behavior or by some underlying disease disorder.
          - Self-starvation in cats can lead to life-threatening liver disease.

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## Synopsis

Guide to increasing the health and life of your feline friend.

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It has an overview of most of the cat's body systems and includes a vaccine guide for owners, as well as tips for first aid and behavior as well as senior cat care. I like to carry it with me for quick reference.

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