



How to Care for Your New Kitten

Kittens, like all animal babies, need special care. It is important to provide lots of love and, as well as more practical items like toys, a litter box, and an adequate scratching post. Be sure to kitten-proof your house, removing small or delicate items to prevent damage by curious little paws and teeth. Kittens are great climbers, so think vertically!

Never play or roughhouse with your kitten (or cat) using your bare hands or feet. You don't want her to get the idea that biting or scratching human skin is okay; it's not. Substitute a toy for enticing fingers. Fishing-pole type toys, such as "Da Bird," are great for interactive play. (But be sure to put away all string-type toys after every play session; a swallowed piece of string can require emergency surgery!) Your involvement in daily playtime is essential for your kitten's mental and emotional development as well as to create a strong bond between you, and will pay big dividends in healthy belly-laughs for you!

You can provide your kitten a good quality dry food (and many people prefer to have their cats remain willing to eat dry food for various reasons) but her main diet should be a high moisture food such as canned or homemade - plenty of protein, fat and moisture are important for proper development. Either a "growth" formula or a food certified for "all life stages" is fine. If you have other cats in the house, it's often better to feed everyone an "all life stages" food, than for the adult cats to get into the extra-high high calorie kitten food. To find out how to pick a good quality pet food, click here. Make sure that there is always fresh, clean water available at all times. Filtered or spring water may be better quality and more palatable than tap or well water. Do not use distilled water for pets.

Your kitten should have her first regular visit to your veterinarian at about 8 to 10 weeks of age. This visit should include a thorough, head-to-toe physical examination, a check for ear mites, initial deworming, testing for infectious diseases such as leukemia, and (if everything checks out normal) the first distemper vaccination. The vet will discuss the need for other vaccines and give you a schedule for these. Spaying and neutering will be done at about 6 months of age. If you are thinking of declawing your kitten, you owe it to both of you to read this article before making that decision.



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