

CARE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADULT CATS

These suggestions will enable you to provide the very best health care, allowing your cat to live as long as possible.

Annual physical examination

A year between physical examinations for your cat is like four to seven years between annual examinations for us. For the eight years of your cat's life, annual examinations are recommended, or more frequently if problems are detected. After eight years, twice yearly examinations are recommended, as problems associated with aging become more frequent.

- **Nutrition**

Feed the highest quality food you can afford. Premium pet foods such as Science Diet Healthy Advantage, Iams and Purina One are much more digestible and result in a healthier pet with less stool volume. DO NOT feed table scraps and snacks.

- **Internal parasites...**

threaten your cat's health. In large numbers, they can cause intestinal blockage, vomiting, bloody diarrhea and even death. Certain types can also affect you and your family. Microscopic examination of your pet's stool needs to be done regularly. We will send a reminder when it is time for a stool examination.

- **Provide a constant supply of fresh, clean water**

- **Vaccinations and boosters**

Unfortunately, there is no safe, effective drug available to combat any of the major viral diseases of cats. Vaccination is the only effective form of protection. Vaccination enables your cat to fight infection by stimulating the immune system, so it makes antibodies against the viruses.

To maintain this protection, cats must be vaccinated regularly, so the level of immunity is always high enough to prevent disease. Immunity produced by vaccination does not last forever. It is very important that your cat be revaccinated on a regular basis.

Feline Panleukopenia (Distemper) is a killer disease of cats. It is highly contagious and easily transmitted from cat to cat. Nine of ten cats with distemper will usually die.

Feline Respiratory Diseases affect cats of all ages and cause great suffering. Chances are high that your cat will be exposed.



Feline Leukemia (FeLV) is incurable, contagious from cat to cat, and usually fatal. FeLV destroys the cat's ability to fight off infections of any sort.

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) is another incurable viral disease of cats. This virus causes a disease similar to AIDS in humans.

Feline Infectious Peritonitis (FIP) is a viral disease that is also incurable and always fatal. Although a vaccine is available, it is not as effective as other vaccines.

Rabies is a fatal infection of the nervous system that attacks all warm-blooded animals, including humans. There is no cure. Rabies has been on the rise in cats for the past several years.

- **Dental care**

is just as important for your pet as it is for you. The average lifespan of a cat that receives timely dental care is 15-20% longer than one that doesn't. Infected teeth and gums are very painful to your cat, and also spread infection to the kidneys, heart, liver and elsewhere. Dental cleanings are a necessary component of a long, happy life for your pet.

- **Prevent obesity**

Extra pounds burden the heart, kidneys, joints and muscles, decreasing life expectancy 30-50%. Obesity predisposes cats to diabetes, chronic constipation and lower urinary tract disease.

- **Brush your cat regularly...**

to prevent mats and tangles. After brushing, wipe off loose hair with a damp towel. This is especially helpful if members of your household are allergic to cats. It also helps to prevent hairballs in your cat.

If you are unable to remove mats, then you need the services of a professional groomer. Please feel free to call our groomers for advise or to schedule an appointment. NEVER use a scissors to cut out mats, as it is very easy to cut into your cat's skin.

Keep an eye out for fleas, dandruff, sores or bald spots. Report any skin problems to your veterinarian.

Preventing fleas with regular use of effective flea products is much less costly than treating a full-blown infestation of fleas in your home. DO NOT waste your money on over-the-counter flea products. Most do not work, and some can even be harmful to your pet. Our products provide good control, and we will take the time to individualize a flea program to suit your requirements and budget. Be sure any products you use are labeled for cats. Canine products may be fatal to cats.

- **Litter box**

Scoop out your cat's litter pan daily & empty it completely at least once a week. Plastic garbage bags make economical box liners. Avoid heavily scented litter, as many cats don't like it. If your cat is urinating outside the box in inappropriate places, call us right away. This is usually due to bladder problems.



- **Never give aspirin, ibuprofen or acetaminophen (Tylenol) to your cat**

- **Report any changes or problems...**

in your cat's health or behavior to your veterinarian as soon as possible. Diseases or behavior problems usually are more successfully treated the earlier they are addressed.

- **As your cat ages**

Geriatric workups help detect many of the problems caused by aging (kidney, liver, heart, arthritis, dental, etc.). Early detection can lengthen your cat's life. Proper treatment will improve your cat's quality of life. For early detection of disease, we recommend periodic blood screening. A routine blood screen is a window into the body that determines internal organ function that cannot be determined by physical examinations alone. For cats older than seven years, annual testing is recommended.

- **Pet health insurance**

Pet health insurance is available to help you in the event your pet incurs a serious illness or injury. It is heartbreaking to put a pet to sleep simply because the treatment was unaffordable. Veterinary Pet Insurance Co. has affordable policies that can be used at any veterinary facility in the country. Several policy choices are available including a wellness plan. Please ask us for a brochure.



PREVENTATIVE HEALTH CARE IS MUCH MORE THAN JUST VACCINATIONS!

We are here to help you assist your pet in living
a long, healthy life at the lowest cost to you.

The Top Three Fatal Feline Diseases

For years now, we've had safe and effective vaccines for distemper, rabies and the respiratory diseases that used to kill millions of cats every year. Because most of our clients are vaccinating their pets for them, these once very common infections are under control. (They are still common in outdoor and unvaccinated cats.)

The diseases that are now killing millions of cats are ones that many of our patients are still not being vaccinated for. These diseases are known by a confusing set of initials – FeLV, FIV and FIP. About 10% of cats in this country are infected with one or more of these viruses. Once your cat becomes ill with any of these diseases, he or she will die. There are no effective treatments or cures. What will save cats' lives is preventing the spread of these infections through blood testing and vaccination.

All three of these infections can be carried and spread for long periods of time by cats who are harboring the viruses with no obvious symptoms of disease. Cats who appear perfectly healthy can be infected, yet not come down with an illness for months or years. During these months or years, however, they are contagious to other cats.

1. The number one infectious disease killer of cats in the United States today is Feline Leukemia Virus, or FeLV. FeLV destroys the cat's immune system, so that he falls prey to anemia, cancer or infectious diseases that a healthy cat would not get. A simple blood test is 99% accurate in diagnosing the disease. It is less accurate in kittens or in cats who have only recently been exposed to the disease. We routinely test all new cats and kittens entering a household. We also vaccinate for this disease as often as we can. Effective vaccines have been available for more than ten years. The vaccine should be boosted every year if exposure to other cats is possible. Your veterinarian will help you determine the schedule that is best for your cat.
2. The second leading disease killer of cats is Feline Infectious Peritonitis, or FIP. This disease causes chronic fever, poor appetite and weight loss. One form of this disease causes fluid buildup on the abdomen, making it fairly easy to diagnose. The dry forms are more challenging, as no good diagnostic test is available. Vaccination is of limited value, and therefore, not usually recommended.
3. The last virus on our list is the Feline Immunodeficiency Virus, FIV, a relative of the HIV virus that causes AIDS in people. There is a good blood test that will tell you whether your cat is a carrier for this disease. A recently introduced vaccine may be appropriate for outdoor cats that are at risk for this disease, due to their lifestyle. Because this disease is primarily transmitted by bite wounds, it is usually seen in roaming male cats and is very uncommon in kittens.



Rules to remember to help prevent the spread of these fatal diseases:

1. Keep your cat indoors. The more time he or she spends outside, the more exposure there is to infectious disease.
2. NEVER bring a new cat or kitten into the household and let it interact with other cats and kittens until you have it, and the resident cat, tested and vaccinated. Keep any new arrivals in a separate room with separate food and water bowls and litter box, until your veterinarian tells you it's safe. Many of the cases of FeLV and FIP we see occur in an indoor cat in a household that recently adopted a new cat or kitten. Keeping new arrivals separated also cuts down the spread of parasites and respiratory infections. WASH YOUR HANDS AFTER HANDLING EITHER PET IF THEY ARE NOT TESTED AND VACCINATED. Also, wash your hands after petting any unfamiliar cats outside your home. This is for your cat's protection. These diseases are **NOT** contagious to humans.
3. Remember, 1 cat in 10 is carrying one of these viruses, healthy looking or not. That 1 cat in 10 may be a cat in your house right now.
4. If your pet becomes ill with any of these three diseases, it will die. We may be able to extend the cat's life, but we cannot save it. For a long, healthy life, be sure your companions are protected!



NORMAL CAT BEHAVIOR

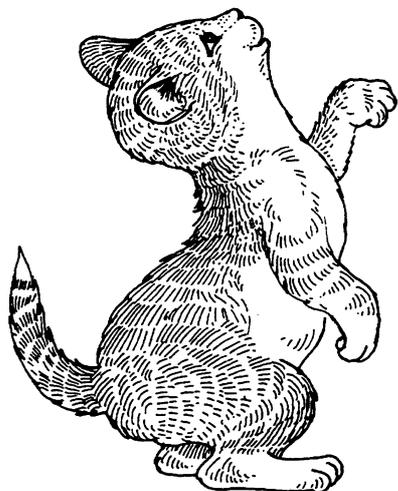
Cats are inquisitive and adventuresome, which frequently gets them into trouble. You will need to cat proof your home just as you would for a toddler, to prevent accidents and illness.

To prevent problems:

Keep a squirt gun or bottle handy. A squirt of water in the face deters most kittens from doing things they shouldn't do, especially jumping up on counters or playing too aggressively, and it doesn't hurt them.

Spend lots of time playing with your kitten, so his energy is used up more constructively. Tie an object to a string on a pole, and wave it around while watching TV or drag it around the house. **DO NOT** play with your kitten by wiggling your fingers or toes – this encourages biting.

Do not hit or strike your kitten for being naughty. This will only frighten or anger him and frequently leads to biting and clawing behavior. Punishment is the least effective training method for cats.



Never force a kitten to stay in your lap if he or she wants to get down. Do not grab at your cat or scare him, or he may learn to bite. Rough and tumble play also encourages aggression, so play gently, using a toy and not your fingers.

Confine your kitten to one room when you aren't home, one that has no plants or dangerous objects. Swallowing or choking on small objects is very common in cats and kittens. Beware of things such as rubber bands, pencil erasers, needles and thread, small toys, metal objects such as paper clips, scraps of fabric, earrings, etc. Anything smaller than 1" diameter can probably be swallowed and needs to be kept out of a kitten's reach. Don't give your kitten string or yarn to play with! These are among the most common and deadly of intestinal obstructions.

Provide at least one scratching post for your cat to use. Even declawed cats like to stretch and knead their paws. Rubbing catnip on the post will encourage its use, as will keeping it in a handy place where you and the kitten spend a lot of time. Cats usually prefer a larger post that they can climb up and down. Some cats like wood or rope-wrapped posts instead of carpet. The more your kitten likes his post, and the more he is encouraged to use it, the less he will scratch at the furniture or rugs. Use your squirt bottle if you see him scratching where he's not supposed to.

To prevent chewing on cords or shoes, use unscented, roll-on antiperspirant on these items once or twice a week. Cats don't like the drying, bitter taste and will soon shy away.

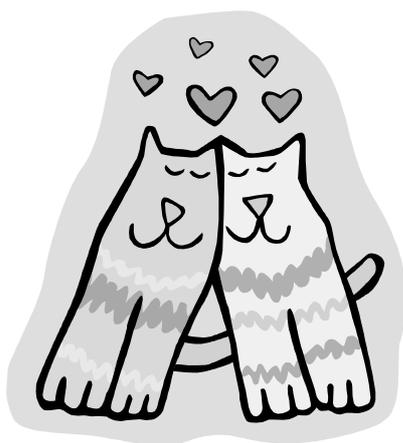
Try putting aluminum foil around your plant pots or lay sheets of it on counter tops or tables, especially when you can't be home to use your squirt bottle! Cats don't like the shiny, noisy foil and will generally avoid it. Many types of plants are poisonous to your pet, so it's best to keep them all out of reach. Double sided sticky tape works well on couches and chairs – cats don't like the sticky feel on their feet. Just peel the tape off when it's no longer needed.

Be especially vigilant in the laundry and kitchen areas. Laundry soap and bleach are toxic when licked off a cat's paws when they've walked through it. Many cats die each year after exploring the washing machine, taking a nap in the dryer, or jumping on or in a hot stove or oven. Cats are also good at learning how to open cabinet doors!

A collar and ID tag are a good idea, especially if your cat tries to escape outdoors. Use break-away collars to prevent choking. Microchips are also available now to safely and permanently identify your cat if he or she becomes lost.

To prevent litter pan avoidance, be sure the pan is easily accessible and in a quiet place where your cat will feel comfortable. If your house is large, it is best to have more than one box. We also recommend multiple litter pans with more than one cat in the household. Scoop the boxes daily and empty them completely once a week – many cats won't use a dirty litter pan. Avoid heavily scented litters – cats don't like perfume. Never physically punish a cat for going outside the litter box – they quickly learn to sneak and hide their accidents. Many times, litter box avoidance is caused by a physical problem such as intestinal parasites, colitis or bladder infection. **Any time a cat stops using its pan, he or she should have a physical examination by a veterinarian.**

If at any time you are having problems with the behavior of your cat, call us right away. Most behavior problems are easily treated if caught in time.



WHAT IS ‘FLUTD’?

Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD), previously known as Feline Urologic Syndrome (FUS), is one of the most common medical problems of cats. It occurs due to the formation of crystals, made up primarily of magnesium, within the bladder. These sand-like crystals irritate the bladder lining, causing pain and may allow a bacterial infection to set in.

FLUTD affects both males and females, but due to their anatomy, it is a much more serious problem in male cats. Crystals and mucous clumping together can form a plug within the penis, which blocks urination. A cat that is plugged and cannot urinate will become ill very rapidly. If not treated in time, the bladder may rupture, and the kidneys will fail. Death usually occurs within 24 to 48 hours.

Female cats have a wider urethra, so they don't plug up as easily. They will, however, develop painful bladder inflammation (cystitis). Cats of either sex can also develop stones in the bladder or the kidneys.

Signs of FLUTD in both males and females are bloody urine, straining to urinate (often confused with constipation), pain on urination or frequent urination, often outside of the litter box. Male cats that are plugged and cannot urinate will often become suddenly and extremely ill. You may see vomiting, depression, squatting in a strange position, reluctance to move or walk, weakness or loud cries of distress. About 1-5% of cats are affected by FLUTD.

CAN FLUTD BE TREATED?

Yes, it can. Females are usually healthy enough to be treated at home. Males that are plugged are anesthetized and a catheter is passed into the bladder, dislodging the plug. The catheter is left in place for 1-3 days to allow the bladder and urethra to heal. Treatment is also given as needed for dehydration, infection and shock.

Both males and females will need to be treated with special diets, antibiotics, and sometimes urinary acidifiers as well. The prescription diets are continued for the lifetime of the cat, because without long-term dietary management, FLUTD usually recurs.

CAN IT BE PREVENTED?

The best way to prevent FLUTD is to feed your cat a diet low in magnesium. The majority of commercial cat diets have 10 to 20 times the amount of magnesium needed. Read pet food labels carefully, and beware of pet foods labeled “low ash”. “Ash” refers to all the minerals, not just magnesium. A food can indeed be “low ash” but still be too high in magnesium. Good foods available to help prevent FLUTD are available. Ask us which one may be best for your cat. Once your cat has had a bout of FLUTD, special prescription diets are much more effective, however.

Encourage frequent urination by keeping your cat's litter pan clean. Provide plenty of fresh water. Avoid overfeeding to prevent obesity. FLUTD is more common in overweight cats. **Above all, remember that FLUTD in male cats is a true medical emergency.** If you think your cat may be suffering from this problem, call your veterinarian immediately!

Weight Control And Exercise for Cats

Over half the cats we see every year are overweight, many extremely so. Being overweight has some serious consequences for cats, just as it does for people. In fact, the average life span of an obese pet is years shorter than that of pets who stay slim and trim.

Weight-related diseases include arthritis, heart disease, diabetes, liver disease, bladder problems and many types of cancer.

Most of our house pets are not very active. Not only are many of them overweight, but they also don't get enough exercise. This is bad for their health and contributes to behavior problems – a cat that is bored and inactive is more likely to be destructive or aggressive.

So what should you do to prevent these problems?

Some cats are better at burning calories than others, but for most cats, the recommended feeding amounts on cat food bags are way too generous. If you are feeding a good quality food, your cat can eat much less than the label says and still get all the nutrients necessary for good health. Feed only what your pet needs to maintain a healthy weight.

You should be able to easily feel your cat's ribs and backbone under his skin. If there is lots of padding over the ribs, your cat is probably overweight. You should be able to see his waist – his body should curve up behind his ribs if you are looking at him from the side. Looking down from above, you should also see a pronounced narrowing of the body behind the ribs. Also, look for bulges over the hips or a potbelly, common places for excess pounds to show up. (Many cats have a pouch of fat and skin between the back legs, even if they are not overweight. This is not the same as an enlarged "pot belly".)

On the other hand, if your pet's ribs or backbone are visible, or very pronounced when you run your hand across them, your pet may be too thin.

Choose a good quality pet food which fits your pet's lifestyle. If your pet is a couch potato, he needs a low calorie food.

Limit treats, snacks and table food. It doesn't take many extras to tip the scales. Avoid processed treats that are loaded with fat and salt. If you must feed treats, give bits of the pet's regular food. Canned food is OK in small amounts, but the more moist food you feed, the faster plaque and tartar will build up on the teeth.

Make sure your cat gets the exercise he needs. If he tends to be lazy, get him up and moving with a game of chase the string (tie an object to the string and never let go of it!) or roll the wad of paper. How often does your cat really cut loose and RUN? Probably not often enough!



If your cat is already overweight, he'll need an exercise program and/or a restricted calorie diet. Most "lite" foods available in supermarkets are only about 10-15% less in calories than regular food. If you feed one of these and give the same amount of food as you feed of the regular, non-diet food, your pet may stop gaining weight, but he probably won't lose any. To achieve a reasonable amount of weight loss in a reasonable amount of time, you need to cut back by 25-30%. The easiest way to achieve this is to feed a prescription weight loss diet. These foods are low in fat and calories, so you can feed an amount large enough to keep your pet feeling full, while still achieving weight loss. Hill's Prescription Diet r/d is just such a diet. It is available at our hospital.

The first step is to measure how much you are feeding per day. Most cat owners simply fill the bowl. Given unlimited access to food, it's no wonder pets get too fat! Start by measuring how many cups of food you put in the bowl over the course of a week. Then divide by seven to get the amount fed per day (usually $\frac{1}{2}$ to one cup). Now you need to feed a smaller amount of food. If your cat is eating a cup of food per day, you might want to only give him $\frac{3}{4}$ of a cup. Divide this amount into two or three daily feedings. Cats are natural nibblers and will do better on several small meals a day rather than one large one.

If you switch to a store brand reduced calorie, you won't need to cut back as much on the amount you feed as if you stay with a regular maintenance food. If you feed a prescription diet, you may not need to cut back at all in amount, as some of these foods are high in bulk and fiber. Either way, it's very important to measure the amount you feed! That lets us adjust the amount fed as the cat loses weight. Always cut the food back slowly, as rapid weight loss can make a cat sick.

Most pets become less active with age, so their calorie needs often go down as they get older. Decrease their food accordingly. Most geriatric pets benefit from a food made for older pets, which is lower in fat and salt. On the other hand, some elderly cats become too thin. Low fat senior diets are not necessarily a good choice for thin pets.

Please let us know what we can do to help you keep your pet in the peak of health. We welcome you anytime to put your pet on our scale or ask our opinion on his current weight or weight loss goals.



CATS AND HAIRBALLS

Cats spend a significant part of their lives cleaning and grooming – as much as 1/3 of their waking hours. While this natural instinct makes them ideal house pets, it can lead to some uncomfortable side effects.

The problem begins during the cleaning process, when cats often swallow their own hair. The cat's tongue is the culprit. It has tiny, barb-like projections on its surface, which pull loose hair from the coat. Because of the inward angle of these barbs, the hair remains lodged on the tongue's surface until the cat swallows it. Since hair is largely insoluble protein, it cannot be dissolved by the cat's digestive system. As this undigested hair begins to knot in the stomach and accumulate in the gastrointestinal tract, it can interfere with normal digestion and elimination.

Symptoms of "hairballs" include constipation, listlessness, dry cough, and even vomiting. It also may cause depression and loss of appetite in cats.

The most dramatic and obvious symptom is the regurgitated hairball, which is often tubular in shape. Besides being an inconvenience to clean up, it is a definite sign that your cat has a problem and needs help.

Although rarely fatal, hairballs are very uncomfortable for your cat and can lead to serious complications.



WHAT CAN BE DONE

Daily brushing of the cat's coat to remove loose hair is a good preventative medicine. Longhaired breeds like Himalayans and Persians need special attention. During the spring when all cats shed, daily brushing is especially important. After brushing, wipe your cat down with a damp towel to remove loose hair.

Besides brushing the coat, there are several medications which are available to eliminate hairballs, and help prevent their reoccurrence. A dietary supplement, when added to the cat's food, can aid in the elimination of accumulated hair and other materials without discomfort. Laxatives have been recommended by veterinarians for decades. There are many different brands of laxative remedies available, and it should be easy to find one that appeals to your cat's taste.

Science Diet Hairball Control formula is a diet designed to reduce problems associated with hairballs. It's effective in most cats and available at our hospital.

Remember, your cat relies on you for help in relieving this problem. A program of frequent brushing, regular use of a hairball remedy and following the advice of your veterinarian is all it takes.

NUTRITION FOR SENIOR PETS

Nutritional needs change with age. This is why so many older people develop osteoporosis, are too thin or have blood pressure or cholesterol problems. Changes in the senses of taste and smell affect appetite. Changes that alter activity and exercise levels also affect nutritional requirements. All these things can lead to decreased or increased needs for certain nutrients, such as fiber, calcium and sodium.

Older pets, like older people, often suffer from nutritional deficiencies. Changes occur over time in metabolism and in the function of the intestinal tract. Problems such as thyroid abnormalities, heart and kidney disease and arthritis change the body's needs for certain nutrients. Nutritional excesses, as well as deficiencies, are common in older pets.

Feeding the proper diet is important in both humans and their pets at every age, but in older animals it can become critical. The effects of a lifetime of living are appearing with age, including the effects of good or poor diets. Avoid feeding table scraps to older pets, as this not only can upset their nutritional balance, but is also more likely to lead to stomach upset or diarrhea. Don't feed treats that are high in fat and salt. Also, avoid foods that have lots of artificial flavors and colors.

Be sure to have your pet's teeth taken care of, so it is comfortable for him or her to eat. Periodontal (gum) disease, gingivitis and cavities can make chewing very painful. Nutritional disturbances, weight loss and spread of infection to other organs are common results of dental disease.

If your pet is otherwise healthy, but just getting up there in years, now is the time to switch to a diet made especially for senior pets. As the digestive tract becomes less efficient with age, it is important to feed a high quality senior diet. Diets for senior pets should have limited or controlled amounts of sodium, phosphorus, protein and fat, all of which can harm an older pet's health if fed in excess. We never recommend generic, store brand or cheap foods, but we especially discourage them for older pets, who are more prone to diet-related diseases.

If your pet has an age-related illness, such as kidney disease, chances are good your veterinarian will prescribe a special diet or a supplement to help keep the disease under control. Blood testing in older animals frequently reveals problems that can be addressed with supplements or a change of diet. In cats, we often find low potassium levels on blood testing. Potassium deficiency causes no symptoms until in the advanced stages, and eventually leads to muscle weakness and collapse. Elevated cholesterol levels are common in dogs. Lower fat and higher fiber levels in senior pet food are often helpful. If your pet is too thin, on the other hand, a high fat food may be more appropriate.

What you feed your pet every day is one of the most important components of good health care. Choose wisely, and be sure to follow your veterinarian's advice as to what food is best. It may mean the difference between a long, healthy life and one that's not.

TOP TEN REASONS TO KEEP YOUR CAT INDOORS

10. Their owners will never have to bail them out of the local shelter.
9. It will be much more difficult for people to steal them.
8. Crotchety neighbors will like them better.
7. Birds will like them better. (Domestic cats are one of the main predators of song birds.)
6. When it's ten o'clock at night, their owners will always know where they are.
5. There is less chance of getting a leg caught in a steel-jawed trap.
4. It's unlikely their owner will transmit to them the Feline Leukemia Virus, Feline Immunodeficiency Virus and other contagious diseases. Cats contract these viruses through contact with other cats.
3. They are not as liable to have fleas, fungal infections such as ringworms or worms as are free-roaming animals.
2. They are less likely to be hit by a car when crossing the living room than they are when crossing the street.
1. The lifespan of an average indoor cat is twelve to fifteen years, and that of an average outdoor cat is about half that long.

