La Cumbre
ANIMAL HOSPITAL

10 Signs of Illness in Cats



Sometimes it's difficult to identify when your cat is not feeling well. Watch for these signs of illness, and consult with your veterinarian as soon as possible if your pet begins to show any of them.

Information adapted from healthycatsforlife.com and Dr. Susan Little, DABVP (feline), Bytown Cat Hospital in Ottawa, Ontario

1. Inappropriate Elimination

A cat that urinates inappropriately could have any number of conditions associated with the behavior, including lower urinary tract disease, kidney disease, urinary tract infection, and diabetes mellitus. It can also be a sign of arthritis, which makes it difficult for cats to get into the litter box.

2. Changes in Interaction

Cats are social animals, so changes in interactions with humans or pets can signal disease, fear, anxiety, or pain.

3. Changes in Activity

A decrease in activity is often a sign of arthritis or systemic illness, while an increase in activity can be caused by hyperthyroidism.

4. Changes in Sleeping Habits

If your cat is sleeping more than normal (keep in mind that average adult cats may sleep 16 to 18 hours a day – though much of that is "catnapping"), it could be a sign of an underlying disease.

5. Changes in Food & Water Consumption

Most cats are not finicky eaters. Decreased food intake can be a sign of several disorders, ranging from poor dental health to cancer. Increased food consumption can be caused by diabetes mellitus, hyperthyroidism, or other health problems.

6. Unexplained Weight Loss or Gain

Sudden weight loss can be a sign of hyperthyroidism, diabetes mellitus, or a host of other diseases. Obesity, on the other hand can cause an increased risk of diabetes mellitus, joint disease, and other problems.

7. Changes in Grooming

Patches of hair loss or a greasy or matted appearance can signal an underlying disease. Cats who have difficulty grooming often suffer from fear, anxiety, obesity, or other illnesses. An increase in grooming may signal a skin problem.

8. Signs of Stress

Stressed cats may exhibit signs of depression, hid more, or spend time awake and scanning their environment. These signs may indicate a medical condition, so it's important to rule out physical ailments before addressing the stress behaviorally.

9. Changes in Vocalization

An increase in vocalization or howling is often seen with an underlying condition like hyperthyroidism or high blood pressure. Many cats also vocalize more if they're in pain or anxious.

10. Bad Breath

Bad breath is an early indicator of an oral problem – studies have shown that 70 percent of cats have gum disease as early as age 3.

La Cumbre Animal Hospital

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Bringing Home Your New Kitten

What is the best way to introduce my new kitten to my home?



A new home with new sights, new sounds, and new smells can be a scary place for a young kitten, but there are things you can do to make the transition easier. Your new kitten likely left behind a loving mother, playful siblings, and a familiar environment, so he needs a little special care when being introduced to his new surroundings and new family.

Getting started

Your kitty needs to feel comfortable with you as soon as possible, so start your relationship by interacting with him on his own turf where he feels safe and secure. Spend time playing and cuddling him before taking him away from his familiar environment. Bring home the comforting scent of his current home by petting his mother and siblings if they are present. Better yet, bring along a towel and rub his family members or even the inside of his kennel to carry these *old* scents to your kitty's *new* home. Familiar smells warm the heart and steady the nerves.

Going home

The ride home should be as pleasant as possible. Place the scented towel in a cat carrier and gently place your kitten inside. If he resists, remove the top of the carrier rather than nudging him through the door. Cats prefer cozy spots so they usually like being in a carrier. By encouraging your kitten to ride within the confines of a carrier, you are providing safety and security, as well as starting a good routine that you can maintain for future car rides.

Arriving home

When you arrive at home, place the kitten and carrier in a small, quiet room in the house away from traffic. Open the door of the carrier and allow the cat some time to come out willingly. Place fresh water, food, and a litter box near the entrance of the carrier. Allow the kitty to come and go at will. If he cowers in the back of the pet caddy and refuses to venture out after 30 minutes, gently remove the top of the carrier, pick him up, and show him the food and water bowls and litter box. If the kitten is very tiny, a small litter box with low sides may be necessary at first. If possible, duplicate the type of litter material used in the previous home (**see Litter Box Training**).

"Give him lots of time to become familiar with this room before giving him a tour of the entire house."

All kittens will need time to investigate their new surroundings. This is less overwhelming for your new kitten if you initially limit the available space by keeping him in a single room. Give him lots of time to become familiar with this room before giving him a tour of the entire house. Gradually introduce him to rest of the one room at a time, and always stay with him when you bring him to other rooms.

Staying home alone

After interacting with your kitten on your turf, your scent will replace the smells associated with his old home and you will become his source of security. He will find comfort in having you around, but you can't always be with him so your kitty must learn to stay at home alone. Set up a safe and secure area where you can leave your kitten when you are not around to supervise.

This location should be large enough to accommodate a food bowl, water bowl, litter box, toys, and a resting area. Remember that cats prefer to have their food and water separated from the litter box, so designate a separate feeding area, litter box area, and resting/play area. Make sure the area is cat-proofed by removing things that may cause injury (sharp objects, string, electrical cords, rubber bands or other items that could be swallowed) and inspect the areas for nooks and crannies where a kitten might hide or get stuck. Cats are natural explorers and independent by nature, so most investigate and adjust to their safe haven readily.

Preventing problems before they start



The key to preventing behavior problems in kittens is to identify and provide appropriate outlets for all of their needs. This is especially important for indoor kittens since all of their playing, hunting, exploring, climbing, scratching, eliminating, and socializing will need to be channeled into acceptable indoor options.

Encouraging safe and appropriate play activities from the first day in your home will make life much more pleasant for you and your cat. Most of the physical activity of an outdoor cat is focused on the hunt. Indoor cats do not have to hunt for food, so interactive play that satisfies the hunting instinct makes for a happy cat. In fact, stalking and pouncing are important play behaviors in kittens that facilitate proper muscular development, so these activities should be encouraged within reason.

Provide predatory play sessions by playing together with wands, movable toys, or small lights. Chasing a toy attached to a wand or batting around a soft ball gives the cat needed outlet for his hunting instinct. The best toys are lightweight and movable. Avoid toys that are small enough to be swallowed and keep string and ribbon out of reach. These items can cause serious intestinal problems if they are swallowed.

Serving food inside foraging toys and hiding treats inside boxes or paper bags also piques a cat's interest in exploration (**see Enrichment for Indoor Cats, Play and Play Toys, and Play and Investigative Behaviors**).

In addition to play sessions with owners, highly social and playful cats may also benefit from having a second social and playful cat in the home provided a safe hierarchy has been established. In other words, all cats involved recognize the "top cat."

Cats climb trees in nature and lounge on the branches, so this instinct must be satisfied, too. Comfortable, accessible bedding in a quiet location will encourage the cat to sleep in his own quarters, but cats do like to sun themselves on the back of the best chair in the house.

"Safe climbing alternatives and scratching
posts will help deter destruction of furniture."

Safe climbing alternatives and scratching posts will help deter destruction of furniture. One important rule of thumb is that each cat is different; you must choose the types of play and toys that are most appealing to your

cat and most appropriate for your household. Try cat trees and scratching toys and posts with different types of materials and surfaces so you learn what your cat likes to climb and scratch. By providing a surface he likes and teaching him where it is appropriate to scratch, you can prevent inappropriate scratching before it begins.

What should I do if I have other pets?

Some kittens not only face a new home, they also face a new family that includes other pets as well as humans. Some kittens may show fear and defensive postures toward other pets in the home, but most young kittens are simply playful and inquisitive around other animals. In fact, existing pets that have an established territorial instinct for the home may pose more of an aggressive problem than the new kitty. If you know or suspect that your dog or cat might be aggressive toward the kitten, choreograph their introduction with safety in mind.



Keep your cat or dog on a leash or have someone hold them when introducing the new kitten. Allow the pets to explore each other and intervene only if you detect signs of impending aggression. Usually, gently correcting inappropriate behavior on the part of the new or existing pet and reinforcing desired responses will diffuse the situation, but be prepared to use the leash and retreat quickly if tensions escalate.

Planning ahead will make the introduction of the new kitten easier. Review training commands with your dog. Ask him to sit and stay if either he or the kitty becomes agitated during the introduction. Have him on a leash in case a hasty retreat is necessary. Resident cats may not respond to voice commands, but they can be placed on a leash/harness for quick avoidance of dangerous behavior.

The presence of other pets in the house makes confining the kitten to a restricted area even more important for two reasons. First, the kitten needs personal space where he feels safe and secure. Second, the new kitten should not intrude on the personal space already claimed by the existing pets. Feeding and sleeping should be in separate locations, at least for a while. With time, both the new kitten and your other pets will learn the other's behavior patterns and signals while developing mutual respect and trust. When this happens, anxiety levels are decreased on both sides. Until then, the new kitten needs a place to avoid confrontation by climbing or hiding to remove himself from the situation.

If the existing pet is an adult cat instead of a dog, there may not be as much difficulty for the new kitten. Most adult cats are fairly tolerant of kittens as long as their territory is respected and they don't feel neglected. It's important to spend quality time with both the new and the resident cat. In fact, during the transition period it is a good idea to spend *extra* time with the older cat. In addition to avoiding competition for attention, you must deter competition for food. If you follow the plan to provide the new cat with his own eating area, this should not be a problem, but monitor the older cat's bowl to ensure that the new kitty doesn't eat from it.

The introduction period will usually last one to two weeks and will have one of three possible outcomes:

- **The existing cat will remain hostile to the kitten**. This is an unlikely occurrence if competition for food and affection are minimized during the first few weeks.
- **The existing cat will only tolerate the kitten.** Hostility will cease, but the existing cat will act as if the kitten is not present. This is more likely if the existing cat is very independent, has been an only cat for several years, or if marked competition occurred during the first few weeks. This relationship may be permanent no matter how friendly the kitten is, but it is not usually harmful.

- **Bonding will occur between the existing cat and the kitten**. They will play together, groom each other, and sleep near each other. This is more likely to occur if competition is minimized and if the existing cat has been lonely for companionship.

How can I help my kitten enjoy physical contact?

Depending on his personality and early experiences as a kitten, your cat may either enjoy or dislike certain types of handling. In order for the cat to learn to accept and enjoy physical contact from people, it is critical that the human hand *only* be associated with positive experiences and that all physical punishment is avoided.

Begin with those types of handling that the cat enjoys like scratching him behind the ears. Speak to him in a kind voice while petting him. For reluctant cats, you may consider giving a treat during the petting sessions. This technique can be applied to other types of handling and can help the cat become accustomed to, and perhaps eventually enjoy, petting, grooming, teeth brushing, nail trimming, and even bathing.

How can I help my cat accept the carrier?

You probably got off to a good start with the pet carrier by following the recommendations for bringing your new kitty home. Continued crate training will come in handy over the kitty's lifetime. There will be trips to the veterinarian or vacation travel or times of home confinement (e.g. allergic guests, contractors coming and going, etc.) that require short stays inside the pet carrier.

To foster positive feelings about the pet carrier, start by leaving the carrier in the cat's feeding quarters with the door open. Place toys or his food bowl inside the carrier to entice him inside. A pleasant experience and the freedom to come and go as he pleases will give your cat a better view of the carrier.

"A pleasant experience and the freedom
to come and go as he pleases will give
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After he becomes comfortable entering and leaving the carrier of his own accord, close the door briefly while he is inside. Each time, try to leave the kitten in a bit longer before allowing him to exit. Contrary to your instincts, never allow the kitten out when he cries or scratches at the crate or he will associate those behaviors with escape. Instead, wait until the kitten is calm and quiet, praise him and allow him to exit. Take a short car ride with the cat in the carrier with a destination other than the veterinary hospital. No need for the cat to always associate the carrier with medical care! With a little patience, you can help your cat regard the carrier as a safe haven rather than a prison. Feliway® might help some cats to more quickly adapt to their carrier (see **Crate Training and Travel**).

How do I deal with inappropriate behavior?

Cats can be demanding creatures so it's important to instill good manners early on. Inappropriate behavior such as swatting, excessive vocalization, and biting should not be tolerated. If your kitten begins to exhibit these behaviors, quickly and quietly leave the area and cease all interactions. Once the kitten is calm and quiet, resume interactions. The goal is for the kitten to learn that calm, quiet behavior warrants attention while aggressive actions do not. Make time daily for appropriate interactions with your cat that include play and petting.

Disciplining a young kitten may be necessary if its behavior towards people or property is inappropriate, but harsh punishment should be avoided. A sharp, "No!" may be all that is needed to stop your kitty in his tracks. However, remote punishment that associates the consequences with the *action* instead of the person is

preferred. For most kittens, hand clapping or rattling a can of beans can divert attention and be intimidating enough to inhibit undesirable behavior when you are present.

How do I ensure that my cat is well socialized?

The prime socialization period for cats occurs between two and twelve weeks of age, so much of the cat's socialization will have taken place while he is still with his mother and siblings. During that time, the kitten is very impressionable. If he has good experiences with people, dogs, or other cats, he will likely continue to accept them. If he has no experience at all, or unpleasant experiences with any of them, he may become apprehensive or adverse to them. Therefore, during the period of socialization, we encourage you to expose your cat to as many types of social situations and influences as possible. Use positive reinforcement and make your kitty feel secure during the introduction of any new experience.

With a little work and patience, you will quickly become your new kitty's best friend and hopefully, you will gain a great friend, too.

This client information sheet is based on material written by: Debra Horwitz, DVM, DACVB, Gary Landsberg, DVM, DACVB, DECAWBM, & Lynn Buzhardt, DVM
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Cat Behavior and Training - Crate Training and Travel

Why are cats so reluctant to travel?



Cats are highly attached to territory, and movement away from that secure base is not something that is undertaken lightly! Traveling in cars, planes and other forms of human transportation can be a very stressful experience for all concerned, in part because the cat is no longer in control of its own experience.

"The cat's fear of leaving its familiar surroundings is compounded by its fear of being enclosed."

For cats that are not used to being confined to a crate, being confined in a carrier adds insult to injury and the cat's fear of leaving its familiar surroundings is compounded by its fear of being enclosed. In addition, cats that are not used to the motion and sounds of the car or plane may become quite frightened by the experience.

My cat seems to get worse with every journey. Why doesn't he get used to it?

For most cats, travel is a relatively uncommon experience and there is simply not enough opportunity for any significant level of habituation to be achieved. Unlike dogs, who come to see the car as a chance to accompany their owners on what might be a fun and adventurous outing, most cats see travel as an entirely negative experience and the likely destinations of feline transport confirm this. Visiting destinations such as veterinary clinics, boarding kennels, and unfamiliar or new homes are probably the most common destinations for a travelling cat and none of these give much opportunity for teaching cats that travel is fun! Thus, each subsequent trip may be more anxiety evoking than the last.

I want my cat to travel happily in the car. Can I teach it?

"The best time to teach cats is when they are very young."

Cats can certainly learn to enjoy car travel and there are cats that actively seek the inside of the family car and happily purr for the entire journey. In most cases these cats have been taught to travel; the best time to teach them is when they are very young. There is a period in the kitten's life when it is most likely to adapt to new experiences and when it can come to accept just about anything as being normal, provided that it is fun! Unfortunately, this period occurs very early in the kitten's life and therefore the responsibility for introducing kittens to car travel may need to be undertaken by breeders. However, few breeders have the time to ensure that all of their charges are taken for daily trips in the car. Realistically, it will be the new owners who need to start the introduction process and, even when the primary period of sensitivity has passed (after 2 months of age), short frequent pleasurable car trips will still be very valuable. Taking along some favorite treats or play toys and travelling to pleasant destinations on the first few trips can help to ensure positive experiences. Although cats perching in the back window of a car may look cute it is important to ensure that your cat is under control during a journey and in most cases this will mean confining the cat to a carrier of some sort. Of course, this can lead to further fear and anxiety if your cat has not been crate trained.

My cat reacts badly to the carrier. What can I do?



One of the major sources of stress for cats during travel is confinement within a cat carrier that has only been used to transport the cat. If either the travel itself or the destination is unpleasant, the cat will develop further negative associations with the carrier, seeing it as a signal of the impending veterinary clinic visit or airplane ride. Training kittens to enjoy being in their carrying boxes can make these outings far less traumatic for all involved. Many kittens learn to use a carrier as a safe area or bed if you begin at a young age to associate the carrier with exploration, play, food or sleeping. Even when cats are older it is possible to break down the negative image of the carrier and work to make it a safe haven rather than a prison cell. For cats that get accustomed to spending time in their carrier, the carrier may actually help to settle the cat when the cat is traveling, visiting, or hospitalized. How secure an individual cat feels when placed in its carrier will depend on the amount and type of previous training, as well as individual personality differences between cats.

"The first step is to select the right kind of carrier for your cat."

The first step is to select the right sort of carrier for your cat. There are a number of things to consider. The ease of cleaning and the way in which you put the cat into, and take it out of, the carrier are factors that are likely to be determined by your own preferences. Some cats are far more relaxed when they can see what is going on around them, in which case a wire basket is better for them. Others feel more secure when they are totally hidden from view, and a solid cat carrier will be a better choice for these individuals. Cats may prefer to enter and investigate carriers that have a front opening, a top opening or both. However, for owners, removing the cat from the top may be easier, especially if the cat is not ready or willing to voluntarily leave its carrier.



Whichever type of cat carrier you purchase, the most important step is to introduce the cat to a carrier for which there has been no previous negative experience and to keep it available for the cat to investigate. You can increase the chances that the cat will use or explore the carrier by putting treats, play toys or food inside, by lining it with a warm blanket, and by keeping it in an area where the cat likes to play and sleep. In some cases, beginning with the top off the carrier may encourage investigation and as the cat becomes more comfortable the carrier can be closed. Some cats may quickly take to the carrier as a sleeping, security or hiding area. Do not attempt to force your cat into the carrier. Your cat should first learn to enjoy and feel comfortable in the carrier before you begin to use it for transport.

"Do not attempt to force your cat into the carrier."

I do not have time to introduce my cat to its carrier in this controlled way. What can I do to make the car trip next week more bearable?

If you must travel with your cat and have not had time to introduce your cat to its carrier, it is important to take steps to make the confinement as stress-free as possible. Putting familiar bedding inside the carrier, together with a favorite toy, can be helpful. The idea is to make the carrier smell familiar and therefore reassure the cat that it is safe. Another possible way in which to increase the familiarity of the carrier is to apply a synthetic feline facial pheromone, such as Feliway®. This pheromone may help the cat to relax during the journey and, in trials, it has been shown to decrease the signs of anxiety in cats during car travel and during hospital stays, especially when sprayed into the cat's own carrier. In order to be most effective, it must be applied to the interior of the carrier 30 minutes before you need to put your cat inside.

Should I consider a sedative for car or airline travel?

"Individual cats can act very differently to sedatives and anti-anxiety medications."

If your cat becomes distressed during travel, medication is certainly an option. However, individual cats can act very differently to sedatives and anti-anxiety medications. Selecting the right medication for any individual is not always easy. You also need to be aware that medication may not last for the entire duration of your plane trip and therefore should not be used as an alternative to the behavior therapy approaches discussed above. Your cat will still need to be prepared for its travel by being introduced carefully to the carrier and the feline facial scent might also be used within the carrier to make the journey less stressful. This applies to long car journeys as well as plane travel. If you feel that medication is necessary because of the severity of your cat's reaction to travel, you will need to discuss this in detail with your veterinarian. It may be useful to use a trial dose prior to traveling to determine the effects that it has on your cat as well as the optimum dose. Although sedatives can reduce motion sickness and may help your cat to sleep through the trip, they do not reduce anxiety and may pose some risk for cats that are elderly or have heart or other underlying illnesses. Anti-anxiety drugs and natural compounds that reduce anxiety are another option you might discuss with your veterinarian. They are a better choice for reducing anxiety but may not reduce motion sickness and are not as effective for sedation.

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Dental Health and Tooth Brushing "How To's"

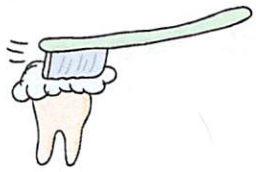
All pets have teeth. And their teeth need to be cared for just as your teeth do. Good oral care is as important to good health as are diet, vaccinations, parasite control, and annual health examinations.

WHY DOES ORAL HEALTH MATTER?

- Gum disease is the most common infection in pets.
- About 80% of cats and dogs over 3 years of age have gum disease.
- Gum disease hurts.
- Gum disease infection can eventually cause tooth loss.
- Gum disease infections can spread to organs and cause kidney, liver and heart disease.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Feed a high quality diet. We recommend Hill's Prescription Diet t/d for most healthy pets. It comes in both dog and cat formulas.
- Schedule regular health examinations (at least once a year). We will check your pet's mouth at that time.
- Schedule professional teeth cleaning with your veterinarian when recommended. Help keep little problems from becoming big problems and causing pain and potential tooth loss.
- Watch for signs of dental disease: Bad breath, tartar build-up, red line along gums, decrease in eating, drooling and/or bleeding gums.
- BRUSH your pet's teeth regularly (daily is best). This is the single most important thing you can do to maintain good mouth health. (Imagine never brushing your teeth!) Start this when your pet is young.
  Can't brush? Ask us about alternatives.



HOW DO YOU BRUSH?

- Teaching your pet to accept tooth brushing is done in several steps and may take some time and patience. Select a time when both you and your pet are relaxed and can stay relaxed for a few minutes.
- Start by gently rubbing the outside of your pet's cheeks for a minute or two. (You may need to begin with a shorter duration if your pet isn't used to having its muzzle handled).
- When your pet is comfortable with this (usually within a few days), place a small amount of pet toothpaste (not human!!) on your finger and let your pet taste it.
- Then place a little toothpaste on a soft toothbrush (pet toothpaste and toothbrushes are available at our front desk) and gently brush one tooth for a few seconds using a slow circular motion.
- As your pet becomes accustomed to the brushing, gradually increase the number of teeth you brush until you are brushing for 30 seconds on each side. In general, only the outside surfaces of the teeth need to be brushed. Remember to brush the teeth way in back of the mouth.
- Note: If you have a cat, there is very helpful video instruction on how to brush at the Cornell Feline Health Center (www.felinevideos.vet.cornell.edu).

IMPORTANT: Be sure to reward your pet with plenty of praise and treats after every step. Keep all the introductory stages very brief. Make it a fun and positive time! Although brushing can be a challenge initially, your pet will benefit by being healthier, having sweeter smelling breath, and needing less frequent professional dental cleaning. After the initial "training" period, many pets enjoy having their teeth brushed.

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La Cumbre
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Parasite Control for Cats

Flea, Tick, Heartworm, Intestinal worms

Parasite control is easy, fast, and extremely safe. Modern preventive medications mean environmental treatment of your home is usually unnecessary, as is the use of chemical sprays or dips. This dramatically decreases toxin exposure for you, your pet, and the environment.

Prevention is Key: To maintain a parasite-free pet and household, use effective flea, tick, and parasite prevention on all cats and dogs living in your home year-round.

Managing an Infestation No single product will eradicate every parasite problem instantly. When a flea infestation is suspected, routine home maintenance is essential alongside your pet's treatment:

- Vacuum thoroughly, paying special attention to baseboards and areas where your cat jumps up and down.
- Wash pet bedding regularly in hot water.

Please Note: It takes at least 3+ months to fully eliminate fleas once they enter your home. Environmental life stages—eggs, larvae, and pupae—must hatch into adults and contact a treated pet before they are destroyed. Continuous preventive treatment during this time is essential.

REVOLUTION PLUS:

Apply every 30 days
Available by prescription only

- Revolution Plus protects against 4 types of ticks
- Safe for cats at least 8 weeks of age & 2.8 lbs
- Topical "spot-on
- Absorbed systemically
- Protects against fleas, ear mites, heartworm disease, roundworms & hookworms

BRAVECTO PLUS:

Apply every 60 days
Available by prescription only

- Topical ”spot on”
- Kills adult fleas and ticks for 3 months
- Kills 100% of fleas within 8 hours

CREDELIO:

Administer every 30 days
Available by prescription only

- Kills adult fleas and treats/controls Black-legged ticks
- Starts killing fleas within 6 hours
- Safe for cats and kittens 8 weeks or older and weighing 2.0+ lbs
- **Must be administered with food** or within 30 minutes of feeding
- Great option for cats that do not like topical "spot-on" treatments

CAPSTAR:

Administer as needed to kill adult fleas
Available in hospital or on our online pharmacy

- Oral tablet that kills adult fleas
- **Capstar is not a "stand alone” flea control product.**
- Safe for pregnant and nursing pets and kittens 4+ weeks old and 2+ lbs
- Starts working in 30 minutes
- Lasts about 24 hours and can be used daily if needed
- Is "flea specific" (toxic only to fleas)
- Leaves no residue on either the pet or in the environment
- No known adverse side effects

VECTRA:

Apply every 30 days
Available on our online pharmacy for home delivery

- Vectra is a topical "spot-on” that kills adult fleas
- OK for kittens 8 weeks old or older
- Not toxic to pets
- NOT absorbed systemically
- Bathing or swimming could decrease effectiveness

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Heartworm Disease in Santa Barbara

Recommendations for Testing and Treatment

Heartworm disease is a life-threatening disease and it is easily prevented.

Heartworm disease is a major problem in much of the USA and in many parts of California. To date, Santa Barbara has been a low threat area. However, there have been locally reported heartworm cases and some dog fatalities. The number of cases is increasing.



It only takes ONE infected mosquito to transmit heartworm disease to your pet! PREVENTION is key!



- Heartworms are a type of roundworm found in an infected dog or cat's heart, lungs and adjacent blood vessels.
- Heartworms are passed from an infected animal (dog, cat, coyote, fox, etc.) to a non-infected animal by a mosquito bite.
- Left untreated, heartworm disease can be fatal.
- Usually symptoms don't appear until it is too late to treat the disease.

Heartworm Lifecycle:

A mosquito ingests microfilariae while sucking blood from an infected animal.

The microfilariae develop into infective larvae inside the mosquito.

The mosquito feeds on an animal and deposits infective larvae via the bite.

After developing in an animal's tissue, larvae migrate to the heart.

Young worms develop into *large adult worms.

*Adult heartworms can be up to 14 inches long!

Adult female heartworms shed microfilariae into bloodstream.



OUR RECOMMENDATIONS (based on guidelines from parasitologists and the American Heartworm Society)

- Start your puppy or dog on Sentinel Spectrum now. (Puppies under 6 months can start medication without a heartworm test. Dogs over 6 months need a heartworm test first.)
- Test your dog for heartworm once a year. This is a blood test done here.
- Give your dog Sentinel Spectrum once each month all year. Sentinel Spectrum is a prescription medication available from us. (NOTE: Sentinel Spectrum treats intestinal parasite and controls fleas in addition to preventing heartworm disease.)
- Recommendations for cats vary. Please ask one of our doctors.
- Heartworm disease can be treatable; however, treatment can be risky, involved, expensive and not always successful. The key is prevention...Start prevention now!

The incidence of heartworms in the Santa Barbara area is changing. Please be aware of this issue and ask periodically for our recommendations.

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Kitten Behavior and Training - Litter Box Training

Do I need to train my new kitten to use a litter box?



Most cats by nature prefer to use a soil type surface for elimination. By providing a litter box with an appropriate and appealing substrate (material), few cats will need to be trained to use it. At about 30 to 36 days of age, kittens leave the nest to search out a loose substrate for elimination.

"The kitten learns specific areas and substrates to use by observing the mother."

The kitten learns specific areas and substrates to use by observing the queen (mother). Although some cats, especially those on their own property, will dig and bury their wastes, many cats only partly cover their feces especially if they are off of their home territory. Some cats do not bury urine or stools at all, even on their own property; these cats may prove harder to litter train.

How can I train my new cat to use the litter box and area that I have selected?

Initially, it is best that the kitten be confined to a small area with an appropriate sized litter box. This allows you to take advantage of a cat's tendency to eliminate in a loose material. As long as the kitty litter is easily accessible and is the only loose substrate available, very little effort should be required to litter box train the kitten. If you confine the cat for any length of time (e.g., if you are going to work for the day), ensure that the room has all the cat's necessities including litter box, water, food or feeding toys, scratching and play toys, and places to climb and explore.

One indoor area that might be equally or more appealing to some cats is the soil around houseplants. This can best be resolved by ensuring that the cat is prevented from getting into the houseplant, moving the houseplants into an inaccessible room, or to placing decorative pebbles or rocks over top of the soil. Kittens may need to eliminate after they eat, after they wake up and after play. At those times, you might place the kitten in its litter box and, if it eliminates, praise the kitten or give a treat.

A kitten does not need to be confined continuously, but should be supervised to prevent accidents and frequently brought back to the appropriate elimination location. If you place a little urine or stool from a previous elimination in the box, its odor should help to attract the cat back to the box. If the kitten soils in a location other than its box on the first attempt, clean up the area thoroughly using a product that is designed to neutralize cat urine odor and perhaps move a small amount of the stool or a few drops of the urine to the box to attract the cat to that area. If there is more than one cat in the home, at least one more litter box should be added (see below). By confining the kitten to an area with its own box, the kitten can establish regular litter habits without competition or threats from the other cats. This also provides for a more gradual and cautious introduction of the kittens to the other cats.

What type of litter material should I use?

There are many types of litter materials available today. These include clay litter, fine "clumping" litter, plastic pearls, silica, recycled newspapers, wood shavings and many others. Some have materials added to control odor.

"Some studies have found that clumping litter may be preferable to more cats and that scented litter is aversive to some cats."

Some studies have found that clumping litter may be preferable to more cats, and that scented litter is aversive to some cats. Since kittens learn the appropriate places to eliminate by following cues from the queen, it may be helpful to continue using the same litter as used in the first home. Although the type you choose is up to you, you might wish to seek guidance as to which litter types are safest if you have a kitten that tends to eat litter (as some young kittens do).

What size and type of litter box should I buy?

Initially, the size of the litter box should be determined by the size of the kitten or cat. A very small kitten may need a box with shorter (lower) sides or a ramp for easier access. As the kitten grows, a larger box is generally more appropriate. Some owners prefer litter boxes with covers on them. This is acceptable if it is acceptable to the cat. You need to be sure that the cat can negotiate the opening by stepping into it and that the cat is not too large to fit into the opening. As the cat grows, ensure that the box still accommodates the cat's needs, increasing its size if necessary.

Where should I put the litter box?

The litter box should be placed in a location that is easily accessed by the cat, yet out of the way. Try to avoid congested household areas. The cat should have some privacy and quiet to eliminate. Laundry and furnace rooms are often used but be sure that noise associated with household machinery is not disruptive and aversive to your cat. Also make sure that the cat does not get locked out of the room at a time when it may have to eliminate. Try to put the litter box in an area that is convenient for you to check on and keep clean. Do not put food and water bowls immediately next to the litter box. If there are dogs in the home, then the litter box should be located where the cat can eliminate without being bothered by them.

How often should I clean the litter box?



One of the most important factors in ensuring continued litter box usage by house cats is cleanliness. Cats are very fastidious animals, and spend time each day making sure their coat, feet, and face are clean. One can assume that they would like a clean place to eliminate. The number of cats in the home and litter usage determines the time between litter cleaning. Fecal material should be removed after each bowel movement, if possible, and the box should be cleaned or scooped of urine wastes on a daily basis, regardless of the type of litter material. The entire contents of the litter box should be cleaned out weekly. Rinse the box with hot water and dry before replacing with new litter.

"Remember that each cat is an individual."

Some clumping litters form fairly hard clumps that are easy to scoop in their entirety and leave little residue behind. If you use one of these types of litter, you may only need to change the litter every few weeks; however, remember to refill the litter to maintain sufficient depth after each scooping. Remember that each cat is an individual. Your cat may like more frequent cleaning of the litter box to maintain good usage patterns. Some cats dislike the odor of the cleansers used to clean litter boxes, so rinse the box thoroughly after each cleaning with hot water. A number of products are self-cleaning and this can be particularly appealing to some cats. However, some cats might be frightened of the motors and cleaning mechanisms in self-cleaning litter boxes.

How many litter boxes do I need in my home?

The number of litter boxes needed depends on the number of cats, the size of the home, the temperament of the cats, and whether there are other pets in the home. When there are multiple cats, multiple pans should be available in different locations, not all side-by-side in one place. Because there can be varied interactions between individuals, multiple boxes in multiple locations allow housemates to avoid one another if they so choose. Even for only one cat, two boxes may be appropriate depending on the layout of the home and the individual preferences of the cat. Some cats prefer one box for urine and one for stool. Older cats may have physical limitations that prevent them from climbing stairs easily and so a box in the location the cat frequents is needed. In general, there should be at least one litter box per cat; however, if soiling problems arise, most behaviorists advise one box per cat plus one more.

What if my kitten does not use the litter box?

Should the kitten begin to eliminate in locations other than its litter box, first review the steps above. Is the litter in an area that is appealing and easily accessed by the cat? Is the litter box being cleaned often enough? Are there enough litter boxes for the number of cats? Try and determine what is so appealing to your cat about the area that your cat is soiling. And, perhaps most importantly, is there anything about the area, box or litter that might be preventing its use (or scaring your cat)?

To determine the most appealing litter for your cat, offer two or more different litters in the same type of box, side-by-side and see which one, if any, the cat uses most frequently. Next, determine the type of litter box the cat prefers by offering two or more litter box types side-by-side (each with the preferred type of litter). You can determine the cat's preferred location by offering the preferred litter box with the preferred litter in two or more locations and determining which one, if any, the cat uses more frequently. If litter box problems persist, then additional guidance and perhaps a behavior consultation might be required.

If the cat lifts its tail and sprays urine onto vertical objects, then this is a marking behavior and would indicate that it's time to consider neutering (if your cat is an intact male) or that an anxiety or territorial problem is emerging and professional guidance should be sought.

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La Cumbre
ANIMAL HOSPITAL

Meeting the Cost of Pet Care

Our pets provide us with fun, companionship and unconditional love. In return, we incur the responsibilities that go along with pet ownership including providing veterinary care.

Wellness and preventive care and keeping pets in a safe environment significantly reduce the risk of illness and injury. Nevertheless, pets do occasionally become sick or injured. Thankfully, the veterinary profession is capable of providing virtually the same kinds of care and procedures as are available for people.

The cost of high quality medical care can be significant. It can be met in a variety of ways.
The American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) and La Cumbre Animal Hospital strongly suggest that all pet owning families assess their financial situation and consider their ability to meet both routine and unexpected expenses.
Resources might include:

- existing savings
- additional budgeting and/or savings
- credit card reserves
- help from a friend or family member
- pet health insurance policies
- Care Credit



If you decide to consider pet health insurance, <u>be sure to understand what the policy does and does not cover:</u>

- Understand the exclusions. Almost all policies exclude pre-existing conditions and some exclude hereditary conditions. Some may exclude certain conditions unique to certain breeds.
- Some policies (but not all) cover some preventive care, such as vaccinations, but there may be additional cost for this coverage.
- Almost all policies have a deductible and a co-pay requirement. Some pay according to a set schedule of "usual and customary fees" while some pay based on the actual incurred expense. Be sure you understand how expense reimbursement will be calculated.
- Ask whether or not the policy allows you to seek care from a veterinarian of your own choosing or whether you must go to a veterinarian that participates in the company's network of providers. When faced with a pet's serious illness, most pet owners want to be able to obtain care from their regular veterinarian.
- Ask if a "high deductible" policy is available if this option is of interest to you.

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Cat Behavior and Training - Play and Play Toys

What should I be looking for when I am buying toys for my cat?



The toys that you choose for your cat must take into account the natural behavior of the species. Often, the simple ones are the best and ones that offer unpredictable movement, rapid movement and high-pitched sound are likely to provide your cat with hours of entertainment. Rolled-up pieces of paper work very well, provided that you are on hand to move them in an unpredictable and exciting fashion. You can add to the value of this sort of play by rolling the paper down stairs or along ledges and incorporating an element of agility into the game.

"Cats also like to be able to pick their toys up, so small items are often more attractive than larger ones."

Cats also like to be able to pick their toys up, so small items are often more attractive than larger ones. If your cat appears disinterested in a toy it is possible to increase its incentive to play by attaching a tasty treat. You can also increase the variety of the "prey" that you offer by attaching different items onto the end of the string attached to a rod for different play sessions. Cats that initially show interest in chasing a toy may quickly lose interest. However, this may not be an indication that the play session is over, but rather that the novelty of the specific toy has worn off. In fact, for some of these cats, the play intensity might be heightened and stopping might only lead to chasing less appropriate objects such as your hands or legs. Therefore, be certain to try at least one or two additional toys before ending the session.

Should I buy catnip toys for my cat?

A number of cat toys are advertised as being impregnated with catnip and this substance can make the toys very attractive. However not all cats show a reaction and indeed as much as 50% of the cat population is not responsive to the chemical which is contained in this herb. Those that react will experience a period of mild hallucination when the chemical nepetalactone acts on their brain and will show a short-lived response of excitement that borders in some individuals on euphoria. There is no harm in this response and the chemical is not addictive, so if your cat is a responder giving access to catnip can add another dimension to his life!

My kitten loves to play a game that involves chasing my fingers as I run them across the back of the sofa or pouncing on my toes as I move them under the covers. Is it okay to play these games with her?

Chasing and pouncing are vital elements of feline predatory behavior and your kitten will spend hours engaging in these activities. When toes and fingers move rapidly across her field of vision they are seen as a suitable target and it can be very amusing to play with your kitten in this way. However, the problem is that your kitten will learn to target human flesh within a predatory context and as she grows up you may live to regret these seemingly innocent games.

"As a basic rule, it is best to only play predatory games with toys that your cat can eventually catch and 'kill,' such as toy mice, pieces of food on the end of string, or balls of rolled-up paper."



As a basic rule, it is best to only play predatory games with toys that your cat can eventually catch and "kill," such as toy mice, pieces of food on the end of string, or balls of rolled-up paper. Therefore, be certain to offer several play sessions with chase toys each day, and schedule them at times when the cat has a history of becoming most active in order to preempt other forms of undesirable chase and play. The size, texture, movement, and possibly odor of the toy can all be used to stimulate the cats interest. However, even though the cat may soon lose interest, owners should be encouraged to play with a few different toys since the novelty may quickly wear off but the cat's interest in play may remain heightened. Interaction with human hands should be limited to the context of affection and to being stroked and petted.

I have heard about cat toys that dispense food. Are these a good idea?

These toys are often referred to as cat puzzle feeders and they can be a very useful way of increasing activity in sedentary or indoor cats as well as providing entertainment for food orientated individuals, who will work hard to get the treats out from inside the device. They are available in many pet shops and have varying sizes of holes that deliver food as the toy is batted or rolled. However, it is also easy to make your own from a plastic bottle, by making small holes along the sides that are just big enough to release pieces of dry cat food that are placed inside. As the cat knocks the bottle around the floor it will be rewarded with pieces of food and the fact that the bottle is transparent and makes a noise as it moves will help to keep the cat's interest. It is also useful to use small soft plastic bottles, which are easy for the cat to pick up and carry around, as this appears to increase their level of attraction in feline eyes!



My neighbor has bought her cat an aerobic center. Would you recommend one of these for my indoor cat?

Over recent years there has been a trend toward the use of cat aerobic centers and these can be very good value. They incorporate the opportunity to climb, balance and scratch and many of them have small toys suspended from them, which offer the opportunity to practice predatory skills. Providing an outlet for these sorts of behavior is essential for an indoor cat such as yours, but even when a cat has access to outdoors it can benefit enormously from this sort of equipment. There are also a number of motorized cat toys and cat puzzles that might keep cats interested in the chase and predation sequence when you are not around. More information is available in (26) Enrichment for Indoor Cats.

What is a scratching post, and why is it important?



Scratching posts do provide an opportunity for play but they are also very necessary since scratching is an important behavior for cats and one that needs to have an acceptable outlet within the home. Probably the most important features of a scratching post are its height, its stability, and its surface texture. Tall posts allow cats to scratch at full stretch and the surface material needs to offer a good purchase for the claws. Wooden scratching facilities can help to transfer scratching behavior into an outdoor context. If your cat is destined for an indoor life you need to avoid future confusion by ensuring that the material on the scratch post does not resemble any of your household furnishings.

When my cat was a kitten, I played with her every day, but surely as an adult these playtimes are no longer necessary?

It is a common misconception that cats only play when they are kittens, when in fact adult cats also benefit from regular playtimes and playful interaction with their owners. As they get older, their play may alter, but the drive to chase, pounce, and kill remains throughout the cat's life and games that allow for these behaviors are always popular.

When should I play with my cat?

The best time to play with a cat is when it appears to be naturally interested. Predatory activity will naturally occur around dawn and dusk so morning and evening playtimes are likely to be the most successful. Sessions can be varied in length depending on each individual cat's interest but in general terms a number of short playtimes of a few different toys over 10 to 15 minutes will help maintain novelty and keep the cats attention.

What is the best way for me to play with my adult cat?

Playing with cats using remote style toys has a number of advantages especially for the more independent adult cat. If a toy is being held in the owner's hand the cat will be aware of their presence and this can interfere with the full expression of their predatory behavior, as it does not seem "real." The close presence of human hands can also encourage cats to "play" with moving fingers and can encourage predatory responses towards owners' hands and ankles. The easiest way to encourage play while remaining a little distant from the cat is to use fishing rod style toys and the aim is to keep the object moving and let the cat repetitively stalk, chase and "kill" the prey. During a natural hunting sequence cats will often spend time observing the movement of potential "prey" without chasing it and while many owners interpret this as a sign that the cat is not interested in the toy the truth is that this cat has just become more efficient at waiting for the right moment to pounce.



I have given my cat lots of toys, but he only seems to play for very short periods of time and then gets bored. Is this normal?

Although cats are naturally playful creatures they are also designed for short bursts of intense physical activity interspersed with long periods of sleep. This means that short intense play sessions are the most beneficial in feline terms and owners often misinterpret the lack of staying power as a sign of boredom. In fact, your cat's play pattern is perfectly normal and you can maximize the benefit of these short playtimes by rotating the toys on a regular basis and ensuring that there is always something new and exciting to keep your cat's interest!

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Cat Behavior Problems - Scratching Behavior

Why do cats scratch?



Scratching is a normal feline behavior. Although scratching does serve to shorten and condition the claws, perhaps the most important reason cats scratch is to mark their territory (both visibly and with the scent of the foot pads). Some cats may increase their territorial marking (e.g., scratching, urine marking) in situations of anxiety or conflict. Cats may also threaten or play with a swipe of their paws.
For cats that live primarily outdoors, scratching is seldom a problem for the owners. Scratching is usually directed at prominent objects such as tree trunks or fence posts. Play swatting with other cats seldom leads to injuries because cats have a fairly thick skin and coat for protection. When play does get a little rough, most cats are pretty good at sorting things out between themselves. Occasionally, rough play or territorial fighting does lead to injuries or abscesses that would require veterinary attention.

"Scratching does serve to shorten and condition the claws."

Cats that live primarily or exclusively indoors may run into disfavor with their owners when they begin to scratch furniture, walls, or doors, or when they use their claws to climb up, or hang from the drapes. Claws can also cause injuries to people when the cats are overly playful or don't like a particular type of handling or restraint. With a good understanding of cat behavior and a little bit of effort, it should be possible to prevent or avoid most clawing problems, even for those cats that live exclusively indoors.

How can I stop my cat from scratching?

It is impractical and unfair to expect cats to stop scratching entirely. Cats that go outside may be content to do all their scratching outdoors, but the urge may still arise when the cat comes back indoors. Cats that spend most of their time indoors will need outlets for their scratching and marking behaviors. If you don't provide appropriate outlets for your cat, don't be surprised if you come home to find objects strewn all over the floor, scratches on your furniture, and your cat playfully climbing or dangling from your drapes. While it may not be possible to stop a cat from scratching, it should be possible to direct the scratching, climbing and play to appropriate areas indoors. Building or designing a user-friendly scratching post, providing a regular daily routine of social play, object play and exercise, and keeping the cat away from potential problem areas will usually be adequate to deal with most scratching problems. A pheromone that encourages the cat to scratch in the desired area, Feliscratch, has recently been found to be effective and may be available commercially in the near future.

How do I design a scratching area for my cat?

Because cats use their scratching posts for marking and stretching as well as sharpening their claws, posts should be set up in prominent areas, with at least one close to the cat's sleeping quarters. The post should be tall enough for the cat to scratch while standing on hind legs with the forelegs extended, and sturdy enough so that it does not topple when scratched. Some cats prefer a scratching post with a corner so that

two sides can be scratched at once while other cats may prefer a horizontal scratching post. Special consideration should be given to the surface texture of the post. Commercial posts are often covered with tightly woven material for durability, but many cats prefer a loosely woven material where the claws can hook and tear during scratching. Remember that scratching is also a marking behavior and cats want to leave a visual mark.

"Be certain to use a material that appeals to your cat."

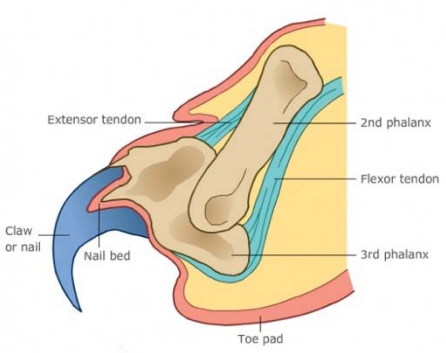
Carpet may be an acceptable covering but it should be combed first to make certain that there are no tight loops. Some cats prefer sisal, a piece of material from an old chair, or even bare wood for scratching. Be certain to use a material that appeals to your cat.

How can I get my cat to use its post?

Placement is important when trying to entice your cat to use a scratching post. Because scratching is also a marking behavior, most cats prefer to use a post that is placed in a prominent location. In fact, the best location to place the post, although not necessarily the most practical, is where the cat has already chosen to scratch. Therefore, it may be necessary to place the post in the center of a room or near furniture that the cat was trying to scratch until the cat reliably uses it and then move it to a less obtrusive location.

Even after you move it, the post may need to remain in the room where the cat spends a great deal of time and wishes to leave its "message." A good way to get the cat to approach and use the post is to turn the scratching area into an interesting and desirable play center. Perches to climb on, spaces to climb into, and toys mounted on ropes or springs are highly appealing to most cats. Placing a few play toys, cardboard boxes, catnip treats, or even the food bowl in the area should help to keep the cat occupied. Sometimes rubbing the post with tuna oil will increase its attractiveness. Food rewards can also be given if the owner observes the cat scratching at its post. Some products have been designed to reward the cat automatically by dispensing food rewards each time the cat scratches. It may also be helpful to take the cat to the post, gently rub its paws along the post in a scratching motion, and give it a food reward. This technique should not be attempted, however, if it causes any fear or anxiety. For some cats, multiple posts in several locations will be necessary.

What can I do if my cat continues to scratch my furniture?



Despite the best of plans and the finest of scratching posts, some cats may continue to scratch or climb in inappropriate areas. In these cases, the first step is to determine whether the scratching is excessive and whether anxiety is a factor. Scratching of new areas and sites may be related to anxiety and marking behavior. Sometimes, the scratching problem is related to a change in the household such as the introduction of a new cat, moving or a change in the family's schedule. Other signs of anxiety such as a change in appetite, a change in social behavior (e.g., more aggressive or more withdrawn), or the onset of urine marking may also occur. When, where and how often the cat scratches might be a clue as to the possible cause. If the cat is not satisfied to scratch in one or two selected areas, then look at the environmental and household factors that might lead to anxiety. If the cat scratches new objects or furniture in the home, this might be a marking behavior. Cats that scratch in a particular room or on a particular person's possessions may have a relationship problem that might need to be resolved. Providing the cat with a more enriched daily routine, including multiple feeding sessions, additional opportunities for social / predatory play, and new objects to manipulate and explore, may help to better settle the cat at times when it might otherwise be scratching. In addition to determining the cause and trying to resolve the

underlying anxiety, the feline facial pheromone Feliway® may be useful to reduce marking when sprayed on the inappropriate locations (but should not be used to deter normal marking of preferred scratching sites).

If the scratching is not anxiety related, but the targets of scratching are undesirable for the owner, a little time, effort, and ingenuity might be necessary. The first thing to consider is partial confinement or "cat-proofing" your home when you are not around to supervise. If the problem occurs in a few rooms, consider making them out of bounds by closing off a few doors or by using child-proofing techniques such as child locks or barricades. The cat may even have to be kept in a single room that has been effectively cat proofed whenever the owner cannot supervise. Of course, the cat's scratching post, play center, toys, and litter box should be located in this cat-proof room.

If cat-proofing is not possible or the cat continues to use one or two pieces of furniture, you might want to consider moving the furniture, or placing a scratching post directly in front of the furniture that is being scratched. Take a good look at the surfaces of the scratched furniture and ensure that the surface of the post is covered with a material similar to those for which the cat has shown a preference. Some scratching posts are even designed to be wall mounted or hung on doors. Placing additional scratching posts in strategic areas may also be helpful for some cats. Keeping the cat's nails properly trimmed or using commercially available plastic nail covers are also useful techniques for some owners.

How do I punish my cat for inappropriate scratching?

All forms of physical punishment should be avoided since they can cause fear or aggression toward the owners, and at best, the cat will only learn to stop the scratching while the owner is around. Indirect, nonphysical forms of punishment may be useful if the owner can remain out of sight while administering the punishment. In this way, the cat may learn that scratching is unpleasant even when the owner is not present. Water rifles, ultrasonic or audible alarms, or remote controlled devices are sometimes useful.

Generally, the best deterrents are those that train the pet not to scratch, even in the owner's absence. If the surface or area can be made less appealing or unpleasant, the cat will likely seek out alternative areas or target for scratching, (hopefully acceptable scratching posts). The simplest approach is to cover the scratched surface with a less appealing material (plastic, a loosely draped piece of material, aluminum foil, or double-sided tape). Another effective deterrent is to booby trap problem areas so that either scratching or approaching the area is unpleasant for the cat, e.g., motion detector air spray, motion detector alarm, odor repellents or a stack of plastic cups that is set to topple when the cat scratches. Of course, neither remote punishment nor booby traps will successfully deter inappropriate scratching unless the cat has an alternative scratching area that is comfortable, appealing, well located, and free of all deterrents.

My cat is using her claws to injure family members. What should I do?

The first thing you need to do is determine why the cat feels the need to use her claws. If the cat uses its claws on the owners in play or when climbing onto or jumping off of the owner's lap, try keeping the nails trimmed, or redirecting the cat to acceptable play behavior. If the cat is anxious, fearful or frustrated, then she may be using her claws to escape. In these cases, it is important to identify and prevent situations in which the cat might use its claws. A more in-depth behavioral assessment is needed to determine why your cat is clawing at family members.

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Should You Trust Pet Healthcare Websites?



The popularity of The Internet has made it easier and faster to find health-related information. Although much of it is valuable, some of it is false and misleading. This fact sheet can help you decide whether information you find on The Internet or receive via e-mail is likely to be reliable.

Who runs the website?	Any website should indicate clearly and often who is responsible for the site and its information. The American Animal Hospital Association's consumer website (www.healthypet.com), for example, clearly notes its affiliation on every major page and includes a link to the AAHA home page.
Who funds the website?	It costs money to run a website. The source of funding should be clearly stated or readily apparent. For instance, Web addresses ending in: "gov" are sponsored by the federal government; "edu" indicates educational institutions; "org" is often used by noncommercial groups; "com" denotes commercial enterprises. The source of funding can affect what content is presented, how it's presented, and what the site owners want to accomplish.
What is the purpose of the website?	Many sites include an "About this site" or "About us" link, which should clearly state the purpose and help you evaluate the trustworthiness of the information.
What is the original source of information?	Many health and medical websites post information collected from other Websites or sources. If the person or organization in charge of the site did not write the material, the original source should be clearly identified.
How is the information documented?	In addition to identifying the original source of the material, the site should identify the evidence on which the material is based. Medical facts and figures should include references such as citations or articles in medical journals. Also, opinions or advice should be clearly set apart from evidence-based information (information based on research results).
How current is the information?	Websites should be reviewed and updated regularly. It's particularly important that medical information be current and that the most recent update or review date be posted. Even if the information hasn't changed, it's helpful to know that the site owners have reviewed it recently to ensure that it's still valid.
How is information reviewed before it's posted?	Health-related websites should provide information about the medical credentials of the people who prepare or review the material. Veterinarians in the United States are doctors of veterinary medicine (DVMs) or veterinary medicine doctors (VMDs) – the equivalent of an MD in human medicine. Common specialist credentials include DACVIM (internal medicine), DACVS (surgery), and DACVD (dermatology).
How does the website choose links?	Reliable websites usually have a policy about how they link to other sites. Some medical sites take a conservative approach and don't link at all. Some link to any site that asks or pays for a link. Others link only to sites that have met certain criteria.
How does the website manage interactions with users?	There should be a way for you to contact the site owners with problems, feedback, and questions. If the site hosts a chat room or other online discussion areas, it should tell you about the terms of using the service. Is the service moderated? If so, by whom and why? Before you participate, spend some time reading the discussion without joining in.
How can you verify the accuracy of information you receive via e-mail?	Any e-mail messages should be carefully evaluated. Consider the origin of the message and itspurpose. Some companies or organizations use e-mail to advertise products or attract people to their websites. The accuracy of health-related information may be influenced by the desire to promote a product or service. It's important to carefully consider the source of e-mail and other internet-based information and to discuss the information with your veterinarian.

This form is adapted from information provided by the Cancer Information Service, part of the National Cancer Institute. Visit cis.nci.nih.gov to learn more.

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TWELVE WARNING SIGNS THAT MEAN CALL OUR HOSPITAL



- **Bleeding** — Bleeding from any part of the body. Blood in urine or stool.
- **Vomiting or Diarrhea** — Many repeated episodes in a short period or intermittently over a period of days or weeks.
- **Convulsions** — Violen t shaking of the head or body with uncontrolled spasms.
- **Lethargy** — Lack of normal energy or playfulness. Reduced tolerance of exercise.
- **Pain** — Limping or favoring a leg. Crying or showing indications of pain when touched or lifted. Difficulty in getting up after rest.
- **Eye Problem** — Redness, discharge, squinting, any film over the eye, or difficulty seeing.
- **Lumps/Bumps** — Any new lump or one that is bleeding or growing rapidly.
- **Scratching** — Frequently scratching or biting any body area; pawing at face or ear, shaking or tilting head.

Changes in:

- **Eating** — Refusing food or eating significantly more or less than usual.
- **Thirst** — Drinking significantly more or less than usual.
- **Urination** — Increase in the volume or frequency of urination; straining or inability to urinate; urinating in the house; any other change in urinary habits.
- **Weight** — Dramatic, unexplained loss or gain in body weight over a short period of time.

DON'T WAIT TO CALL US IF YOU THINK YOUR PET IS ILL!
Early treatment reduces seriousness, hastens recovery, and can make the difference between life and death.

3910 State Street, Santa Barbara, CA, 93105 p 805-967-0121 f 805-683-2259 www.lcah.com

Why Annual Exams?

Why? To identify and solve potential problems before serious consequences and/or suffering occurs.

- Pets age faster than humans do. Two years is 10-20% of a dog's or cat's lifespan.
- Waiting 2 years to bring a pet in for an exam means 10-20% of the pet's life has gone by without veterinary care. For a 10 year old cat, this would be similar to a 70 year old person not seeing a doctor for 7-14 years.
- Animal organs aren't genetically programmed to last as long as those of humans. This means health problems manifest themselves faster in animals.

Older Pets

- Around the age of 8, pets enter their senior years.
- Older pets and pets with medical problems should be seen at least twice a year to evaluate kidney, thyroid, liver, heart, and eye functions more closely. Routine blood work, urinalysis, blood pressure and EKGs are recommended.

Younger Pets

Sometimes, clients ask why we recommend yearly exams when their pet is "perfectly healthy."

- Younger pets should be seen at least once each year to evaluate diet, hip development, mouth health, weight control and behavior problems, in addition to overall health.
- Sometimes a pet that appears to be healthy has problems that are not outwardly apparent. Common problems are related to obesity, oral health, inner ears, and in older pets, heart, kidney and cancer.

An approximate "Age Equivalent" chart is shown here:

* The size of your pet may increase or decrease the human age equivalency.



* DOG AGE	HUMAN AGE	CAT AGE	HUMAN AGE
6 months	10 years	1 year	7 years
1 year	15 years	2 years	13 years
2 years	24 years	4 years	26 years
4 years	32 years	6 years	40 years
6 years	40 years	8 years	48 years
8 years	48 years	10 years	56 years
10 years	56 years	12 years	64 years
12 years	64 years	14 years	72 years
14 years	72 years	16 years	80 years
16 years	80 years	18 years	88 years
18 years	88 years	20 years	96 years
20 years	96 years	24 years	112 years

What happens during an annual exam?

- We ask you questions about your pet's diet, medications and "life style" (e.g. travel?, boarding, wildlife contact, etc) as well as get information about any problems you have noticed or any concerns you may have.
- A comprehensive physical examination is performed to check eyes, ears, nose, mouth, teeth, heart, lungs, skin, hair, reproductive organs, abdomen, muscles, joints, and lymph nodes. Your pet is weighed.
- A fecal sample is checked for parasites, internal and external parasite control is discussed and deworming medication is usually given.
- Vaccinations are updated as needed.
- Because we believe strongly in the importance of diet in preventive medicine, diet recommendations are often made.
- ECG and blood pressure are checked as needed.

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