



## NEW KITTEN INFORMATION

Congratulations on your new family member! Kittens are a lot of fun, and there is a lot that you, as a new "parent," need to do to maintain your pet's well-being. As you go through the following information, please be sure to ask the veterinarian any questions that you may have.

~~~Be sure that your kitten gets all the vaccinations that it needs. Kittens need to have a complete series of vaccines, usually beginning at approximately 6 weeks old and continuing approximately every 3-4 weeks until they are approximately 16 weeks old. The required vaccines are the distemper vaccine (that also protects against other viruses) and the rabies vaccine. The feline leukemia vaccine is recommended for all kittens in their first year of life. At next year's visit, you and your veterinarian will determine if the leukemia vaccine series should continue. If the cat is ever going to go outside or will be in contact with other cats, he/she should also receive the leukemia vaccine booster as directed by your veterinarian. This vaccine works best when it is given to young cats.

~~~It is important to test your kitten for feline leukemia (FeLV) and feline AIDS. In most cases, the parental history of the kitten is unknown, and it is important to know the virus status of the kitten. If the cat ever goes outside or is ever in contact with other cats, this test should be repeated annually.

~~~Make sure that your kitten receives an appropriate series of dewormers for roundworms and hookworms (that may cause infections in people as well) and that fecal samples are examined for other parasites. After the "kitten series," this is done every 6-12 months. You can bring in a fresh stool sample with you for us to examine whenever you come in for an exam.

~~~Begin heartworm prevention medication for your cat when it is 8 weeks old. This is important for all cats, even those who never go outside. One study showed that more indoor-only cats had heartworms than did those who went outdoors. We recommend Revolution, which also control fleas, ear mites, and intestinal parasites.

~~~Make sure your kitten is spayed or neutered before it reaches sexual maturity. This should be done before he/she is 6 months old. It is best to wait until the vaccine series is completed before doing the surgery, but it can be done sooner if needed. Intact cats have a much higher chance of contracting life-threatening illness than do sterile cats. Spaying and neutering are the best means to help control the severe pet overpopulation problem. If you have any questions about the procedure or why it is important that it be done, please ask your veterinarian.

~~~Be sure that the kitten is kept strictly indoors and not allowed contact with other cats until he/she has completed the vaccine series and is spayed (females) or neutered (males.) Until this time, the kitten may not be fully protected against viruses, and may (if female), become pregnant, or (if male) impregnate females.

~~~Consider keeping your kitten an "indoor-only" cat. Indoor only cats generally live longer lives than do those that are allowed outside. This is because, when allowed outside, cats run the risks of encountering cars, dogs, and other cats. Being hit by cars, attacked by dogs, and bitten by other cats (possibly leading to feline leukemia or feline AIDS) are common reasons that cats are presented to the veterinarian. Any cat that has a white or light-colored face or ears should be indoors-only to decrease its chance of getting sun-induced cancer.

~~~Return to the veterinarian every 12 months for your cat's annual examination and any needed booster vaccines or

laboratory tests. This is necessary for the life of your cat!

~~~Feed your kitten a well-formulated diet. Science Diet Feline Growth is an examples of an excellent food. They are strictly formulated to meet a growing kitten's needs, without any excesses that may be harmful. Unlike some grocery-store foods, the ingredients and formulations generally do not vary, so there won't be any sudden changes in your cat's food.

~~~If you ever switch your cat's food, do it slowly over a course of at least 5 days: gradually increase the amount of the new food and decrease the amount of the old food until only the new food is being fed. This will help minimize the chance of diarrhea or stomach upset from a sudden change.

~~~Once your kitten is fully grown (at around one year old,) switch him/her to an adult cat food, such as Science Diet Feline Maintenance or Hill's t/d

~~~Never give your cat "people food." A lot of food that humans can digest without any problems can cause serious problems to pets. Giving food from the table only encourages begging, which will be a problem for you and your cat. As long as a well-balanced, high-quality cat food is being fed, there is no need for supplements.

~~~Maintain a healthy mouth by performing dental home care. Now is the best time to begin training your kitten to accept tooth-brushing. Cats' gums are much more sensitive than people's, so it is important to use a very soft toothbrush, such as the CET Kitten or Cat toothbrushes, or the small end of the CET Dual-Ended toothbrush. Only use a toothpaste that is approved for cats; human toothpaste may be toxic to them. Most cats prefer the CET Poultry-flavored toothpaste; CET Forte (seafood) and malt flavors are also available. If you reward your cat after brushing, you should be able to develop a daily routine. Most cats like the Pounce treats (either regular or "tartar control") and these make great rewards.

~~~Make sure your kitten can be returned to you in case he/she is ever lost. Get a safety-release collar now, and let your kitten get used to wearing it. Get a name tag with your address and phone number to put on the collar. Once the rabies vaccine is given, make sure that he/she wears the rabies tag at all times. Injecting a permanent microchip under the cat's skin provides a permanent, unchangeable means of identification. The injection is like a vaccine injection; no sedation is required and it can be done in minutes.

~~~Give your kitten safe toys to play with, and make sure that there are no possible dangerous objects around the house. Cats love string, but swallowing string can cause serious problems; make sure all sewing materials, tinsel, etc. are out of the kitten's reach. Make sure there are no small objects that the kitten may choke on. Antifreeze will kill pets; be sure that there is no access to it. Other possible toxins, such as old batteries, candies/gum with xylitol, etc. need to be kept away you're your cat. Soft, catnip-filled toys (without any small parts) and exercisers such as the Cat Dancer will keep your kitten entertained.

~~~Cats tend to be litter-box trained very readily. The general rule is to have one more litter box than the number of cats in the household. For example, if you have two cats at home, they should have access to three litter boxes.

~~~Be sure that your kitten has at least one scratching post. Kittens and cats need to scratch; it is done to keep their claws in condition and as a scent marking mechanism. If there is no scratching post available, they will scratch rugs, sofas, etc. Encourage the kitten to use the scratching post by rewarding him/her when they do so, and moving them to the post if they begin to scratch in an inappropriate area.

~~~Begin now to get your kitten used toenail trims.

~~~Take your kitten for car rides other than to the veterinarian's office. If the only time he/she goes in the car is to get vaccinations, he/she may begin to fear the car. Go for short rides around the block, and reward the cat during the trip.

~~~Get a book on kittens! It can give you a lot of other suggestions on how to provide your cat with a long, happy life.

~~~Be cautious when looking at information on the internet. Stick with reliable websites such as [www.veterinarypartner.com](http://www.veterinarypartner.com) .

~~~Call your veterinarian whenever you have any questions!