

How to habituate your cat to A CARRIER



Use this step-by-step guide to help your cat adjust to a cat carrier for her trip to the doctor.

Step 1: Cat, meet carrier

Place the carrier in a cat-friendly area and leave it open so your curious kitty can check it out when she's ready.

Step 2: Draw kitty close with food

Start by placing the food bowl near the carrier. If she's too shy to snack close to the carrier, move it as far away as necessary to get her to eat.

Quick tip: Add a special, tasty treat, such as a bite of canned tuna or chicken, to lure your kitty close.

Once your cat regularly eats from the bowl, begin moving the bowl closer and closer each day until she will chow down happily next to the carrier.

Step 3: Create a dining car

When your cat comfortably dines next to the carrier regularly, she's ready to dine in—inside the carrier, that is. Place the food bowl directly inside the carrier entrance so she can pop her head inside for a quick snack.

Quick tip: Never close the door on your cat. If you need to, you can prop it open and wire it if necessary—just make sure it won't accidentally fall shut on the cat and startle her.

Step 4: Customize your kitty's cave

Place toys and treats in the carrier occasionally so your curious kitty discovers them there. You might try these fun options, depending on your cat's personal preferences:

- > Stuffed mice
- > Catnip toys
- > Feather toys
- > Cat grass

Spraying a synthetic feline facial pheromone in the carrier occasionally may also help.

Note: Never lure your kitty into the carrier and close the door for a trip to the veterinarian. You'll lose the progress you've made—and your cat's trust—and she'll fear the carrier more.

Step 5: Move dinner inside the carrier

When your kitty comfortably dines with her head inside the carrier for several days, you're ready to move the food dish further inside the carrier—a few inches every day until she steps completely into the carrier to eat.

Step 6: Watch and wait

This might be the toughest step, because you need patience. It may take several weeks or months, depending on your cat, but you should start to find your kitty lounging in the carrier sometimes and resting there.

Step 6: Shut the door

Once kitty's comfortable in the carrier, you can start to close the carrier door for a few seconds at a time with your cat inside. If your cat ever acts distressed with the door closed, release her immediately. And next time you close the door, only close it for as long as she tolerated the door closed on a previous session. When you can keep the door closed for long periods of time, you're ready to practice car rides with your cat. Remember, many cats only associate their carrier with a trip to the veterinarian. So your goal is to change your kitty's associations with the carrier and car rides to fun things and special food treats instead of terror and trauma.

Quick tip: Once you find your cat regularly spends time resting, playing and eating in the crate, then on the day you need to take her to the veterinarian, simply close the door and off you go. When you return home, be sure to continue offering food and fun in the crate. As long as more good things happen in the crate than scary things, it should always be easy to take the cat to the veterinarian when necessary.

How many calories is a mouse?

It may be strange to wonder how a mouse would factor on the Weight Watchers “point” system, but it may interest you to know when faced with changing the diet of an overweight or obese cat. Here are some stats from feline specialist Margie Scherk, DVM, DABVP.

**Average calories
in a piece of kibble?**

2 to 3



**Average calorie
content of a mouse?**

30-35



**With that logic,
a meal would be
10 to 15
pieces of kibble.**



Since a cat's preferred natural diet in the wilderness would consist of eight to 10 meals—or mice—throughout the day, allow your cat to mimic the native way of eating at home. This means small, frequent meals for your indoor cat. Just like the “paleo” diet popular with humans, a Paleolithic diet can work as a healthy diet option for cats as well. That means small meals high in protein and fat, eight to 10 times a day. According to Dr. Scherk, cats with a higher protein diet lose more fat and retain more lean muscle.

Remember: Middle aged, obese cats have 2.7-times greater risk of mortality than cats at a healthy body weight—and the longer they remain at an unhealthy weight the larger the risk for diabetes mellitus, skin problems, hepatic lipidosis (fatty liver) and lameness.

Get your indoor cat moving! Cats' native diet consists of small, frequent, high protein meals, but it also requires cats to burn calories catching their little snacks. Ask your veterinarian how to best exercise your cat.





HOW HEARTWORM DISEASE HURTS CATS

The more you know about this potentially fatal disease, the better prepared you'll be to protect your feline friend from infection. Read on for answers to your common questions.

1. Do cats really get heartworms?

Heartworms aren't just a dog problem. If you live in an area where heartworm infection is prevalent in dogs, your cat is at risk, too. Those pesky mosquitoes will bite any animal—regardless of whether its tail wags or flicks.

2. How do mosquitoes transmit heartworms to cats?

Mosquitoes are carriers of heartworm larvae, and just one bite can infect your cat. When a mosquito bites a cat, the larvae enter the cat's system through the bite wound. Some of these larvae develop into adult heartworms and eventually die, causing severe inflammation or damage to blood vessels in the lungs that can be fatal. The larvae that don't make it to maturity die in the cat's lungs, leading to heartworm-associated respiratory disease. Heartworms can even be found in the body cavities, arteries and central nervous system of cats. What's worse, there's no approved or recommended treatment for heartworm disease in cats.

3. Mosquitoes aren't common where I live. Does my cat still need prevention?

Yes. Cases of feline heartworm disease have been reported in all 50 states. The occurrence of heartworm disease is markedly lower in some states, but mosquitoes are resilient and can even survive through the winter. Since it's hard to tell when mosquitoes will be active, year-round prevention is a must.

4. I don't need to worry if my cat doesn't go outside, right?

Wrong. Indoor cats may be at lower risk for heartworm disease than outdoor cats, but there's no guarantee a mosquito won't get into your house—and it only takes one bite to do damage. Studies have reported that approximately 28 percent of cats diagnosed with heartworm disease were indoor-only cats, so year-round prevention is key for indoor cats as well as free-roamers.

5. How do I know whether my cat has heartworm disease?

Diagnosing heartworm disease in cats can be complicated, often requiring blood tests and radiographs or ultrasound. Additionally, since cats are naturally stoic creatures, it may be hard to tell that your cat is sick until the disease has become a major problem. If you notice your cat displaying any signs of respiratory distress, such as coughing, panting, open-mouthed breathing or wheezing, it's a good idea to take her to your veterinarian immediately.

6. What happens if my cat becomes infected with heartworm disease?

Unfortunately, there's no treatment for feline heartworm disease, but cats that test positive can often still be helped with good, supportive veterinary care. Your veterinarian can help determine the best possible plan based on the type and severity of your cat's clinical signs.

7. I want to start my cat on heartworm prevention. What are my options?

There are a number of options available for preventing heartworm disease in cats, and many of the medications perform double-duty and protect against intestinal parasites, too. From chewable tablets to topical spot-on products, there's sure to be a preventive that fits your cat's lifestyle—and yours. Talk to your veterinarian for recommendations.

Information provided by the American Heartworm Society and KNOW Heartworms.

What is good healthcare for cats?



Whether an independent soul or your constant companion, your feline friend needs good care to thrive. Here's a look at what that means—in the veterinary hospital and at home.

At the hospital:

> **ANNUAL WELLNESS EXAMINATIONS.** Cats can often mask how they're feeling—especially if they're under the weather. That's why it's critical to have your cat examined by a veterinarian every year. Older cats or those with behavioral or medical conditions may need to be seen more frequently.

> **DIAGNOSTIC TESTS.** Even if your cat seems healthy on the outside, an underlying problem may be lurking on the inside. Fecal exams, blood and urine tests, and other tests that screen for infectious diseases, such as feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) and feline leukemia virus (FeLV), may be required, based on your cat's age and lifestyle.

> **VACCINATIONS.** Even if your cat spends most or all of its time indoors, it may still be at risk for certain preventable viral diseases. Your veterinarian will assess your cat's risk and develop a vaccine protocol tailored specifically to its needs.

> **PARASITE CONTROL.** Cats are prime targets for parasites such as fleas and ticks, not to mention the ones we can't see like heartworms and intestinal parasites. Your veterinarian will discuss the best options to keep your cat free and clear of these dangerous pests.

> **DENTAL CARE.** Dental disease isn't just for dogs—cats are susceptible, too. Your veterinarian will examine your cat's mouth and determine if further action, like a full oral health assessment and treatment under anesthesia, is needed to keep your cat's teeth and gums in good shape.

> **BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT.** Just as your cat needs to be physically healthy, it needs to be emotionally healthy, too. Your veterinarian will ask questions about your cat's environment—whether there are other pets or children in the house and how your cat interacts with them, what kind of playful activities your cat participates in, and so on—and inquire about any behavioral issues that need attention.

> **NUTRITIONAL COUNSELING.** From questions about the type of food you're feeding and the frequency of meals to assessing your cat's body condition score, your veterinarian will want as much information as possible to determine if any adjustments need to be made in your cat's feeding regimen in order to keep it in the most healthy weight range.

At home:

> **NUTRITION.** Your veterinarian can determine the right type and amount of food your cat needs to stay in a healthy weight range, but the environment you provide for meals is important, too. Putting food in a quiet area or offering it in toys like food balls or puzzles can make mealtimes more enjoyable.

> **ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT.** Cats need to be in stimulating and comfortable surroundings, so be sure to provide plenty of toys, hiding spots, scratching posts and elevated resting areas in your home. And don't forget the importance of one-on-one playtime with you. This will also give you the chance to watch for any changes in behavior.

> **LITTER BOX NEEDS.** Provide at least one litter box per cat—and in a multicat house, throw in one extra box for good measure. In general, cats prefer open litter boxes in a clean, quiet environment and unscented, clumping litter. Cats are also finicky, so it's best not to switch up the brand and type of litter you use. And be sure to scoop the box at least once a day.

> **GROOMING.** Cats are pretty good at keeping their coats in good condition, but they may need help when it comes to claw care. Your veterinarian can show you how to trim your cat's nails. Even better, provide scratching posts for a DIY option—and an enrichment activity, too.

> **TRAVEL AND CARRIER ACCEPTANCE.** It's no secret that most cats dislike carriers, but it doesn't have to be that way. Condition your cat to feel comfortable in a carrier at a young age, if possible. Leave the carrier out in the house and let your cat wander in and out of it. Also, take your cat on short rides in the car, so it won't always associate getting in the carrier with a trip to the veterinarian.

Feline REPORT CARD



Client's name _____ Pet's name _____
 Birthdate _____ Breed _____
 Sex _____ Spayed or neutered? Yes No Color _____
 Today's weight _____ Previous weight _____ Body condition score _____
 Indoor Outdoor Both Doctor: _____

Reason for visit: _____

Behavioral concerns? _____

Current diet? _____ Any concerns? _____

Physical exam findings:

Temperature _____ Pulse _____ Respiration _____

	NORMAL	ABNORMAL	NOT EVALUATED		NORMAL	ABNORMAL	NOT EVALUATED
Attitude	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		Respiratory	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
General appearance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Abdomen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Oral cavity and teeth	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Musculoskeletal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Neurological	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Lymph nodes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Eyes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Genitourinary	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ears	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Integumentary	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Heart	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Rectal exam	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Doctor's notes: _____

Vaccinations administered: _____

DIAGNOSTIC TESTS:

- Fecal exam
- Heartworm test
- Feline leukemia virus (FeLV) test
- Feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) test
- Complete blood count and/or serum chemistry profile
- Urinalysis
- Other

RESULTS

Recommendations (parasite prevention, diet, environmental enrichment, follow-up appointments, etc.):

The 10 most-searched questions about cats

We know you've "Googled" when it comes to your pet. In fact, Google released the 10 most-searched questions pet owners asked about their cats last year. So, instead of leaving the answers to a Google algorithm, here are some veterinary experts to answer your queries so you can get to the bottom of questions like, "Why do cats like boxes?"

Google is a great tool, but if you ever have a question regarding your pet, never hesitate to contact us. We're here to answer the serious to merely curious questions—we're happy to do it! In the meantime, see how John Ciribassi, DVM, DACVB, Elizabeth Colleran, DVM, DAVBP (feline practice) and Ernie Ward, DVM, answer your most pressing questions about Fluffy.



1. Why do cats purr?

>Purring occurs as a result of vibration of vocal cords due to neurological stimulation from brain activity. The purpose is uncertain but it does seem to be associated with pleasurable activity. However, cats are also known to purr

when ill or injured, which lead some to believe that the frequency of the vibration can be associated with greater healing. Purring also is reinforcing for people and therefore can increase the amount of petting. —*Dr. Ciribassi*

>Cats generally purr when in contact with someone; a favored owner stroking, nursing a kitten, or greeting a familiar partner-cat. Positive experiences also elicit purring, rolling or rubbing, being in a warm familiar environment or about to fall peacefully asleep. —*Dr. Colleran*

2. How long do cats live?

>Average life span in cats is around 15 years. This can vary widely depending on the health of the cat, nutrition and preventive care. We have had cats in our practice live to 22 years. —*Dr. Ciribassi*

>Outdoor cats often live shorter lives than indoor. Being overweight or obese shortens life by 1 to 2.5 years on average. Regular health care, physical

examinations, parasite prevention and vaccinations provide protection against threats to life and health.—*Dr. Colleran*

>House cats can expect to live 15 to 20 years, with some reaching 25. Advances in preventing kitten-hood diseases such as distemper and feline leukemia, heartworms and other parasites, are key in extending longevity, along with better diets. Indoor cats face fewer threats from predators and trauma, but indoor cats also are facing an obesity epidemic leading to skyrocketing rates of diabetes. —*Dr. Ward*



3. Why do cats knead?

>Kneading behavior in cats is a reflection of instinctual behavior from kittenhood. Kittens knead the mammary glands of the queen to stimulate milk production. I see this in older kittens and cats when they are content and are attempting to solicit attention. —*Dr. Ciribassi*

>Cats knead for two reasons. While settling down to rest, some cats will knead soft places as if to prepare it to lie comfortably. This may be from a time when vegetation would be knocked down to make a safe sleeping place. Kittens knead the queen to help with milk release when nursing. —*Dr. Colleran*

>One theory is kneading cats are marking territory with special scent glands located in the paws. Another is that kneading is a lingering behavior from suckling. Finally, kneading may be a form of stretching or it just plain feels good. —*Dr. Ward*



4. Why do cats sleep so much?

>Often they appear to be asleep but are instantly awakened; this type of sleep varies with another deeper one. They tend to sleep in short increments of 10 to 30 minutes, so they are probably not sleeping as much as we think.

—*Dr. Colleran*

>Cats sleep an average of 16 to 18 hours a day. One reason is energy conservation. Cats use a special form of sugar to fuel their short bursts of activity. It takes a while to restore this energy so cats are careful when and why they rush into action. Cats are most active at dawn and dusk, so to balance their instinct and our human schedules, they end up taking lots of "cat naps." —*Dr. Ward*



5. Why do cats have whiskers?



>They are very sensitive sense organs and tell a cat a lot about his position in space and what is going on around him. They appear to be particularly useful in low light and darkness, times when other organs cannot collect as much information.—*Dr. Colleran*

>Whiskers are highly sensitive and

help inform the cat about surrounding objects, air movements and more. Whiskers may also be used to gauge whether a cat can slip into a tight space. You can also tell if a cat is nervous or scared if the whiskers are pointing forward at a potential threat. Whatever you do, don't trim or pluck whiskers because they serve an important information source for cats. —*Dr. Ward*

6. What does catnip do to cats?



>Catnip is an herb. About half of cats are genetically likely to respond to active oil in catnip. It is not certain what part of the brain is stimulated by this ingredient but it is not harmful and can be used to help increase use of items like scratching posts. Many treats have

this to help stimulate play. —*Dr. Ciribassi*

>The aroma of catnip in cats is thought to be quite pleasurable. It has no other significance and seems to be a genetic accident. It is an autosomal dominant trait, so not all cats are sensitive. —*Dr. Colleran*

7. Why do cats hate water?



>There are many types and breeds of cats that are comfortable around or in water. Many cats will fish for food. The Turkish Van and Maine Coon seem to like water—even being immersed in it. For those that don't like it, it may be related to the way their fur is constructed. It isn't made for drenching

and can become quite heavy when it is. —*Dr. Colleran*

8. Why do cats eat grass?

>One theory is that it is an evolutionary adaption to intestinal parasites and may serve as a purging mechanism. The taste of sweet moist grass may help to explain it as well as there are some observers who think it is more common with new spring grass. —*Dr. Colleran*

>Most veterinarians agree grass eating seems to be a way

for cats to relieve gastrointestinal (GI) symptoms, parasites or possibly infections. Another theory is that cats are craving micronutrients found in leafy plants. Finally, cats may eat grass simply because they like it. It's important to note some cats suffering from inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) may be misdiagnosed as "grass eaters." —*Dr. Ward*



9. Why do cats like boxes?

>Cats like to hide and yet be able to see what is going on around them. The opening gives them the view and the sides of the box can protect them from being seen by predators. Remember cats are today the same cats they were 10,000 years ago when they hunted and avoided predators to survive. —*Dr. Colleran*



10. What is a group of cats called?

>It is called a clowder or a glaring. —*Dr. Ciribassi*

>A group of related kittens is a litter. A few litters are a kindle. —*Dr. Colleran*

>Clowder originates in Middle English from the term "clotter," which meant, "to huddle together." It also has roots in "clutter" which is what my clowder creates in my house. —*Dr. Ward*



Dr. John Ciribassi, DVM, DACVB, founded the animal behavior specialty practice Chicagoland Veterinary Behavior Consultants located in Buffalo Grove, Bensenville and Chicago, Illinois. Ciribassi is a board certified veterinary behaviorist and has served as president of the Chicago Veterinary Medical Association as well as president of the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior (AVSAB).



Dr. Elizabeth Colleran, DVM, DAVBP (feline practice), is a veterinarian at Chico Hospital for Cats in Chico, California. Dr. Colleran graduated from Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine in 1990 and earned a Masters of Science in Animals and Public Policy at Tufts in 1996. In 2011, she was the president of the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP). She is a Diplomate of the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners, Specialty in Feline Practice. Dr. Colleran speaks at major conferences around the country.



Dr. Ernie Ward, DVM, a veterinarian, author, speaker and media personality, has dedicated his life and career to promoting a healthier lifestyle for people and pets. Known as "America's Pet Advocate," Ward founded the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention (APOPP) in 2005. He lives with his wife and daughters in coastal North Carolina where he began his career with his clinic, Seaside Animal Care, in 1993. He's also a certified personal trainer and USA Triathlon certified coach.



My **cat** has **diabetes** —now what?



With proper care, this common disease is actually quite manageable and cats can maintain a good quality of life. Here's what you need to know.

What is it?

Diabetes mellitus is a condition that develops when the body doesn't produce enough insulin or the insulin that is produced isn't sufficient enough to regulate blood sugar levels. As a result, the body doesn't function as well as it should.

What are the clinical signs?

Cats with diabetes tend to drink a lot of water, urinate frequently and in greater volumes, have a ravenous appetite and, despite the fact that they're eating more, can often lose weight. In some cats, if the disease isn't diagnosed soon enough, a serious condition known as ketoacidosis can develop and vomiting, diarrhea, dehydration, lethargy and anorexia can occur.

How is it diagnosed?

The good news is that diabetes is easy and relatively inexpensive to diag-

nose. With a simple blood and urine test, your veterinarian can determine whether there's an elevated amount of sugar in your cat's body.

How is it treated?

With prompt and correct treatment, many cats will go into remission and no longer be diabetic. To do this, your veterinarian will make recommendations about a proper diet and feeding regimen and start your cat on insulin therapy once to twice a day.

What about follow-up monitoring?

After about a week of insulin therapy at home, your veterinarian will want to perform a glucose curve at the hospital. Over the course of the day, the veterinary team will take blood samples to test your cat's blood sugar levels. Your pet's dose of insulin may need to be adjusted, depending on these results.

Because many cats can go into

remission, your veterinarian may take a more aggressive approach initially to try to return your cat's blood sugar to a normal level and prevent lifelong treatment. Your veterinarian may also speak to you about monitoring your cat's blood sugar levels at home to reduce the stress of going to the veterinary hospital.

What is the prognosis for my pet?

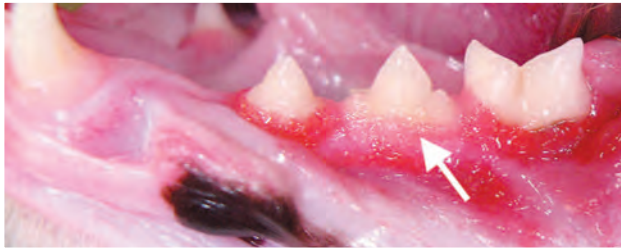
Almost 80 percent of cats go into remission with aggressive therapy immediately following diagnosis. Those that don't go into remission do very well and have a good quality of life with treatment. Cats don't get diabetes-induced cataracts like dogs, so the goal with treatment is keeping the clinical signs of disease under control.

Information provided by Dr. David Bruyette, a board-certified veterinary internal medicine specialist.

What's in your cat's mouth?

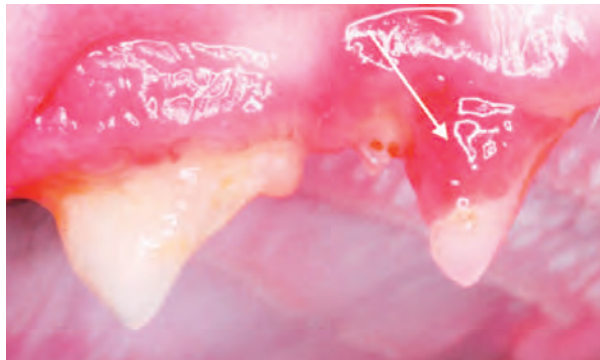
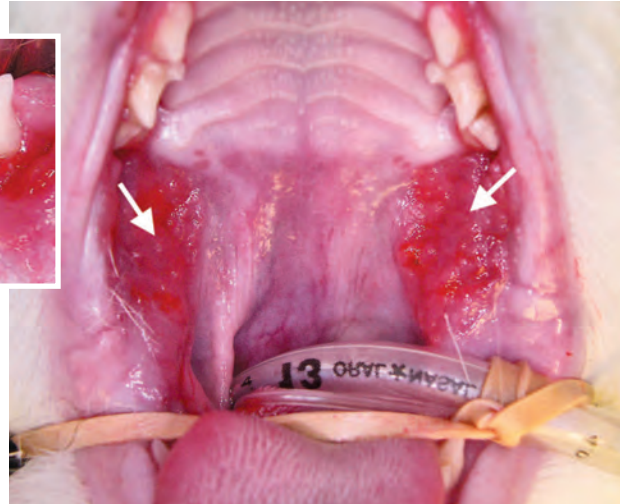
Did you know **70 percent** of cats over the age of 4 have **dental disease**? That's why it's so important for your pet to receive proper dental care. Learn about these different types of dental diseases so you can understand your cat's pain.

1



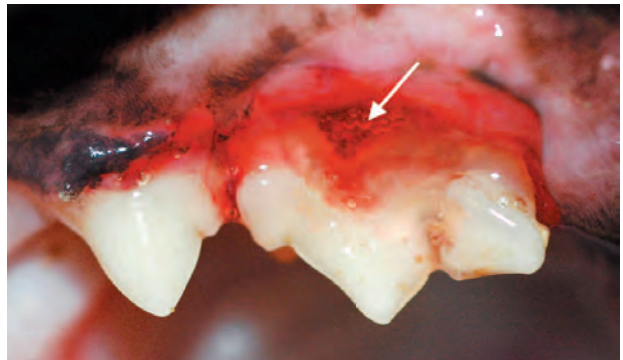
Stomatitis

Stomatitis is a chronic, painful condition most often seen in cats and is defined as inflammation of the oral mucosa. The inflamed tissue may appear bright red and swollen with a cobblestone or raspberry-like texture, and will bleed easily.



2 Tooth resorption

Tooth resorption is a progressive disease that can be very painful. The resorption begins with the breakdown of the bony substance that covers the root of the tooth and will continue to break down the layers of the tooth, exposing the pulp chamber, nerves, and blood vessels.



3 Periodontal disease

Periodontal disease is a progressive disease that causes inflammation of the gums and a loss of bone and soft tissue around the teeth. This is an example of grade 4 periodontal disease, which is the most severe form of the disease. There's enough soft tissue loss in this example that both roots are exposed on the tooth.

Scratch that!

Use these tips to pick an appropriate scratching post to satisfy your cat's itch to scratch.

Pick the right post. Think about the places your cat scratches now. What's her preferred material? Scout out posts and coverings that mimic her favorite scratching surfaces, from sisal to cardboard to carpet-covered posts or even wood or leather.

Structure matters. Does your kitty crave vertical scratching surfaces or horizontal ones? Some cats will enjoy a mix of both.

How high? Does your cat stretch high and far above his head? He might like higher posts. Just be sure it's sturdy so it won't wobble, wobble or fall while you're cat's soothing his scratching urge.

Location matters. Just like real estate, where you place your scratching board counts. Your kitty craves your attention, so it's best to post her post in highly trafficked areas, where the family spends time together. This way her kitty "furniture" is on the scene, close to you—the one she loves best!



Stress triggers for cats

Are you contributing to your cat's anxiety and behavior issues? It's possible if you do any of the following:

1. You punish your cat. Swatting and hitting your cat only teaches it to fear your approach. Telling your cat “no” only interrupts the behavior. Instead, show your cat what you want it to do, and reward it for appropriate behaviors. Cats are very curious and agile—so give yours places to go and things to do, and keep potentially dangerous items picked up and put away.

2. You assume your cat “knows” English. Animals communicate using body language and are very good at figuring us out. Most people don't bother teaching their cats to sit, much less any other cue—but it's surprisingly easy to train them to do behaviors on cue. Just don't assume your cat understands what you're saying without teaching it what you want it to do first.

3. You grab your cat's head to tousle its hair. Nobody likes to have their head grabbed and rubbed—cats are no different! Most cats prefer a few long strokes from head to tail; others prefer a small amount of gentle scratching around the chin or ears. Many cats get irritated by an extended period of repetitive stroking.

4. You hug or kiss your cat. Cats like to be able to move and escape situations. When we hold them tightly, they may become stressed, anticipating that something bad is going to happen.

5. You don't clean your cat's litter box. Nobody likes to use a dirty toilet—including your cat. Imagine not flushing your own toilet for three or four days! Ideally, the litter box should be scooped every time you notice waste. Otherwise, they should be scooped at least once daily. Most need

to be completely empty and cleaned every one to two weeks.

Regular scooping also allows you to identify early signs of illness such as diarrhea, constipation, or excessive or lack of urination.

6. Your cat's litter box is in an inconvenient location. The spot you've chosen for the litter box might work best for you, but a cat that has to negotiate humans of all ages, other pets, stairs, or loud appliances might feel like the journey is a suicide mission every time it needs to eliminate.

7. You tempt your cat to play by wiggling your fingers or toes, then get angry when it bites or scratches you. Cats naturally grab “prey” using their teeth and claws. Offer your cat the appropriate chew toys so it knows that hands are for loving—not biting!

8. You leave your cat home alone with a jumbo-sized portion of food and one litter box while you go on vacation for a long weekend. Especially for cats that eat quickly, this can be stressful because they'll have no food left by the end of the weekend. Cats can become sick if they don't eat every day. Timed feeders can be helpful in this situation. A self-cleaning litter box may also be a reasonable option, but don't rely on it—it's important that you pay attention to the frequency and quality of your pet's eliminations so you can identify any changes that could indicate stress-induced health problems such as cystitis, constipation, and diarrhea.

9. You use strong-smelling cleansers, deodorizers, and products containing alcohol. Cats' noses are sensitive, and these scents can be offensive to them. Be careful about the use of these products in your home or on your person. Some cats may even find the smell of hair spray, perfume, or cologne unpleasant.

10. You add new cats to your home without an introduction period. When an unrelated cat appears and tries to join a related group, it's in the cats' nature to attack and force the outsider to leave. Without a proper period of controlled, gradual introduction, the chance of aggression between cats and stress increases.

Information provided by Valarie V. Tynes, DVM, DACVB, Premier Veterinary Behavior Consulting, Sweetwater, Texas, and Colleen Koch, DVM, Lincoln Land Animal Clinic, Jacksonville, Ill.

