



# PURINA® Kitten How-To Guide

NUTRITION AND HEALTH CARE FROM A TO Z



Your Pet, Our Passion.®

# FOR A GREAT START CHOOSE PURINA!



This book is not intended as a substitute for professional veterinary medical care, but it should provide you with valuable information about your cat at any life stage.

For more information about pet food and pet care, visit [www.purina.com](http://www.purina.com)

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# Welcome to Kittenhood

Everything your kitten is to become starts now, while she's still a kitten. Knowing a few basic facts about cat behavior and care will help you establish a loving relationship that will last a lifetime.

Starting on day one, take some time to learn about caring for your new pet and how to make your home safe for her. Cats are relatively easy to care for, but there are certain basics you should know about and preparations you can make that will allow her to settle in comfortably with her new family.



# Nutrition by Purina.

Because you wouldn't trust your kitten to just anybody.

Purina is proud of its reputation for unsurpassed quality and nutrition. We have more experience developing quality, nutritious pet foods than any company in the world.

The right food at the right time.

Because different pets have different needs, Purina makes a variety of delicious, nutritious foods and treats, including special diets prescribed by veterinarians. Whatever her needs, you'll find a Purina® food that's right for you and your cat.

At Purina, quality is a top priority.

Purina meets or exceeds the industry standards for manufacturing all of its pet foods, including standards established by the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) for nutritional adequacy.

# Welcome Home!

## Kitten-Proofing Your Home

Now that your kitten is at home, it's time to get set up to accommodate this lively and curious family member. It's practically impossible to absolutely cat-proof your home against accidents, but for your kitten's safety, here are some suggestions:

- Securely screen all windows to help prevent falls.
- Keep your kitten off balconies, upper porches and high decks.
- Remember, cats are handy little creatures and have been known to open cabinets and doors. Securely store poisonous materials, including: cleaning supplies, paint and paint thinner, fertilizer, disinfectants, mothballs, insect and rodent poisons, antifreeze, medications (prescription or over-the-counter), sewing supplies (ribbons, pins, buttons, beads, balls of yarn or thread), and hardware (nails, screws, paper clips, etc.).
- Keep toilet lids closed. Cats may play in or drink the water and the lid could close and trap them. Toilet bowl cleansers are harmful if swallowed.
- Cats can get tangled in plastic six-pack beverage holders. Cut the holders apart and discard.
- Keep electrical cords short or secure them against a baseboard so they don't become a chew toy.
- Conduct a "cat check" before leaving home to make sure she hasn't been accidentally locked in a room or unsafe area.
- Keep plastic bags away from your kitten.
- Keeping your cat indoors provides the ultimate safety. Cats who go outdoors are exposed to disease, fights with other animals, automobiles and the possibility of becoming lost.
- Remove poisonous houseplants. Remember to pick up plant leaves that drop onto your floor.

For a list of many common houseplants that are poisonous to cats, visit [www.purina.com](http://www.purina.com) under cat care/safety.

# Let's Go Shopping!

Indoor cats tend to live longer, healthier lives. But indoor cats also need daily exercise, play and enrichment. Make sure you have basic supplies on hand that your cat will need. They are all relatively inexpensive and some can even be homemade.

**CARRIER**—Large enough so your cat can comfortably stand up and turn around; well-ventilated; secure and easy to clean. Cover the bottom with an old towel and the familiar scent should comfort your cat as she travels to an unfamiliar place.

**FOOD AND WATER BOWLS**—Some cats are allergic to plastic, so twin stainless steel or ceramic bowls are ideal. Make sure your cat always has plenty of clean, fresh water on hand. Wash bowls daily. If the home has multiple cats, several bowls in multiple locations are appropriate.

**LITTER BOX MATERIALS**—Choose a litter pan big enough for a full-grown cat, and deep enough so your cat will not scatter contents when she scratches. Kittens may initially need a smaller box with lower sides so they can climb in and out easily. Choose a high-quality cat box filler to control odor. Use a scoop to remove soiled filler daily. Wash the pan once a week with soap and water. Avoid strong disinfectants (containing ammonia); they are not necessary for health and may offend your cat's sensitive nose. Always wash your hands thoroughly after handling the litter box.

**IMPORTANT:** Pregnant women should not change the litter box due to the risk of contracting an organism called toxoplasma. Toxoplasmosis can cause severe birth defects. We recommend that a non-pregnant family member clean and change the litter box. (To learn how to train your kitten to use the litter box, see pages 16-17.)

**BED**—Don't spend a lot of money on a fancy bed until you gauge your cat's preferences. Some cats prefer cozy places within the home. Besides, you can always create a bed from a cardboard box or simply a blanket. Place the bed in a quiet, draft-free area away from the main traffic.

**SCRATCHING POST**—Contrary to popular belief, cats do not use a scratching post to sharpen their claws. They use it for exercise (to stretch), to clean their nails, and to mark their territory visually and with their scent. Get a scratching post right away to help train your cat as soon as she comes home.

The scratching post should be sturdy and tall enough to let your cat stretch out full length. You can make one with some wood and old carpeting or purchase one from a pet store. Most cats prefer material that can rip and tear, such as burlap.

Place the post in a prominent location that both your cat and family frequent, not an out-of-the-way area. Play with her often near her post. She'll get the idea quickly. Place your cat's bedding and scratching post together so that she can use the post when she first wakes up and feels the need to stretch. Bedding and scratching posts can be combined by purchasing climbing towers with built-in resting areas.

**IDENTIFICATION TAG**—An ID tag on your pet's collar is a "must" in the event your cat accidentally escapes from your home. Your cat can also be identified with a microchip that's injected under the skin. The microchip contains your contact information and can be scanned at most clinics and rescue facilities should your cat become lost. Ask your veterinarian about this option.

**GROOMING TOOLS**—These will vary depending on your kitten's breed and haircoat. See recommendations on pages 20-21.

**TOYS**—Cats will play with anything that moves, rolls, rustles or sways. Choose toys made especially for cats—ones that cannot be splintered, torn apart or swallowed. A celluloid ball that rattles, a catnip mouse or a hard rubber mouse is perfect. Many cats like playing with wand-type toys that flutter and move when gently waved by their caregivers. Toys needn't be store bought. Some great playthings include:

- Table tennis ball
- Empty wooden thread spool
- Balled-up waxed paper
- Cardboard toilet paper tube
- Empty shoebox

# Welcome to the Family, Little One.

Most children love kittens and vice versa, but it's important to teach children that your kitten is a sensitive, living creature. Introduce your kitten to your children gradually, during short periods of time. Children must learn not to pull kitten's tail or ears, squeeze or poke her, make loud, threatening noises or rush toward her too rapidly.

A good way for both children and adults to play with a cat is to get down on the floor at her level to make her feel more secure. Remind children that even a small child can look like a giant to a cat.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Exposing your kitten to many people is an important part of socialization and seems to lessen their fear of strangers.



There's a new kid in town. Introducing your little bundle of fur to your other pets:

**TO OTHER PETS IN THE HOUSE**—introduce them to your kitten with care and caution. Introductions through a closed door will help each one become familiar with the scent of the other.

**TO OLDER CATS**—Male or female: they will usually accept a new kitten and may eventually help take care of her. Because kittens are rambunctious and may bother an older cat, do not leave them alone together until you are sure they can tolerate each other.

**TO DOGS**—most dogs and cats also get along, but this may take a little longer. Introductions should be controlled and safe. Dogs should be on a leash held by an adult and never allowed to chase or threaten the kitten; this can be very frightening. There may be some hissing and perhaps some barking, but with time and caution they usually will accept one another. Do not leave them alone together until you are confident that they are friends.

Whether your other pet is a cat or a dog, make a point of showering your older pet with love and affection so that she will not be jealous of the kitten. Let them get acquainted at their own pace.

# What Exactly is Your Kitten Doing?!

Kittens and cats have some rather unique behaviors. And with some of these interesting behaviors, they may be trying to "tell you something."

**CURIOSITY**—Cats are extremely curious. They will climb into almost anything to explore, including a toilet with the lid up. Cats also love warm, dark places for sleeping, so keep dresser drawers, trunks and closets closed. Check to see where your cat is before closing the washer or clothes dryer. Before leaving home, always conduct a "cat check" to make sure your cat has not accidentally been locked in a closet or an empty room.

**PURRING**—Cats start purring when they are kittens and most of them purr when they are secure, content or sleeping.

**KNEADING**—Kneading is the motion a kitten makes instinctively when she is nursing. It consists of pressing one front paw, then the other, against her mother's tummy. Many cats continue to do this into adulthood. It is usually a sign of contentment and affection and is often accompanied by purring. In lieu of the mother cat, your cat will knead anything soft, such as your favorite sweater, a pillow, your lap or even your hair.



**CLAW "SHARPENING"**—A common misconception is that cats "scratch" to sharpen their claws; however, they are merely satisfying the instinct to stretch and "clean" their claws. Another reason cats "scratch" is to mark their territory. They do this by leaving a visible sign and their scent, which is released from glands between their toes.

Your cat will try to satisfy this biological urge regularly and if her scratching post is convenient and in the proper location, she'll leave your furniture alone. If she isn't using the post, try placing it in a more prominent location and rubbing it with catnip. When she starts to scratch something that's off limits, clap your hands sharply and say "NO" in a stern voice. Then pick her up, take her to the scratching post and encourage her to climb and scratch. Always reward her with petting and praise when she uses her post properly. If you have a large house, consider multiple posts.

# Feeding 101

## Why kittens need special nutrition.

Imagine growing from infancy to adulthood in a single year. Kittens aren't just small cats. They have special needs during that crucial first year of rapid growth.

- During year one, your kitten needs the best possible nutrition to promote:
  - Strong bones and teeth.
  - Proper development of body functions, strong muscles, good vision and a thick, lustrous hair coat.
  - Cats have specific nutritional requirements, including the need for an essential amino acid called taurine. Insufficient taurine can result in impaired vision and may cause heart problems.
- Your kitten will do best on a food that is specially formulated for the growth of kittens.

## Where, when and how to feed:

- Bringing a kitten home can be stressful and cause digestive problems. Making an abrupt change in your kitten's food can cause digestive upset, too.
  - Anytime you change your kitten's food, do so gradually over a 7- to 10-day period.
  - Mix the old and new foods, gradually increasing the ratio of new food.
- Place feeding dishes away from foot traffic and noise.
- Check the kitten food package for the amount of food recommended for various age levels and breeds, then adjust so that your kitten does not become overweight.
- Even if your kitten's food is moistened, you must make fresh water available at all times.
- Wash food and water dishes daily.

## What NOT to feed your kitten:

- Never feed dog food to your cat. Cats have unique nutritional needs that dog food does not provide.
- Bones can splinter or lodge in your cat's throat or pierce the stomach walls and intestinal tract.
- Consult your veterinarian before feeding milk to your cat. She doesn't need it and it may cause diarrhea.
- Never feed your cat any food containing chocolate or onions. These can be toxic to your cat.
- Table scraps can create a finicky eater. Since they're high in calories, they can cause obesity.

## Happy Birthday! Making the switch to adult cat food.

Once your kitten has reached her first birthday, she is officially an adult. The high calorie requirements she had as a kitten have gradually declined and she can now switch to an adult food.



### DID YOU KNOW?

A cat's body uses water for virtually every bodily function. That's why it's important to make fresh drinking water available in a clean bowl at all times.

# What's Up, Doc?

## Keeping your cat healthy with regular veterinary visits

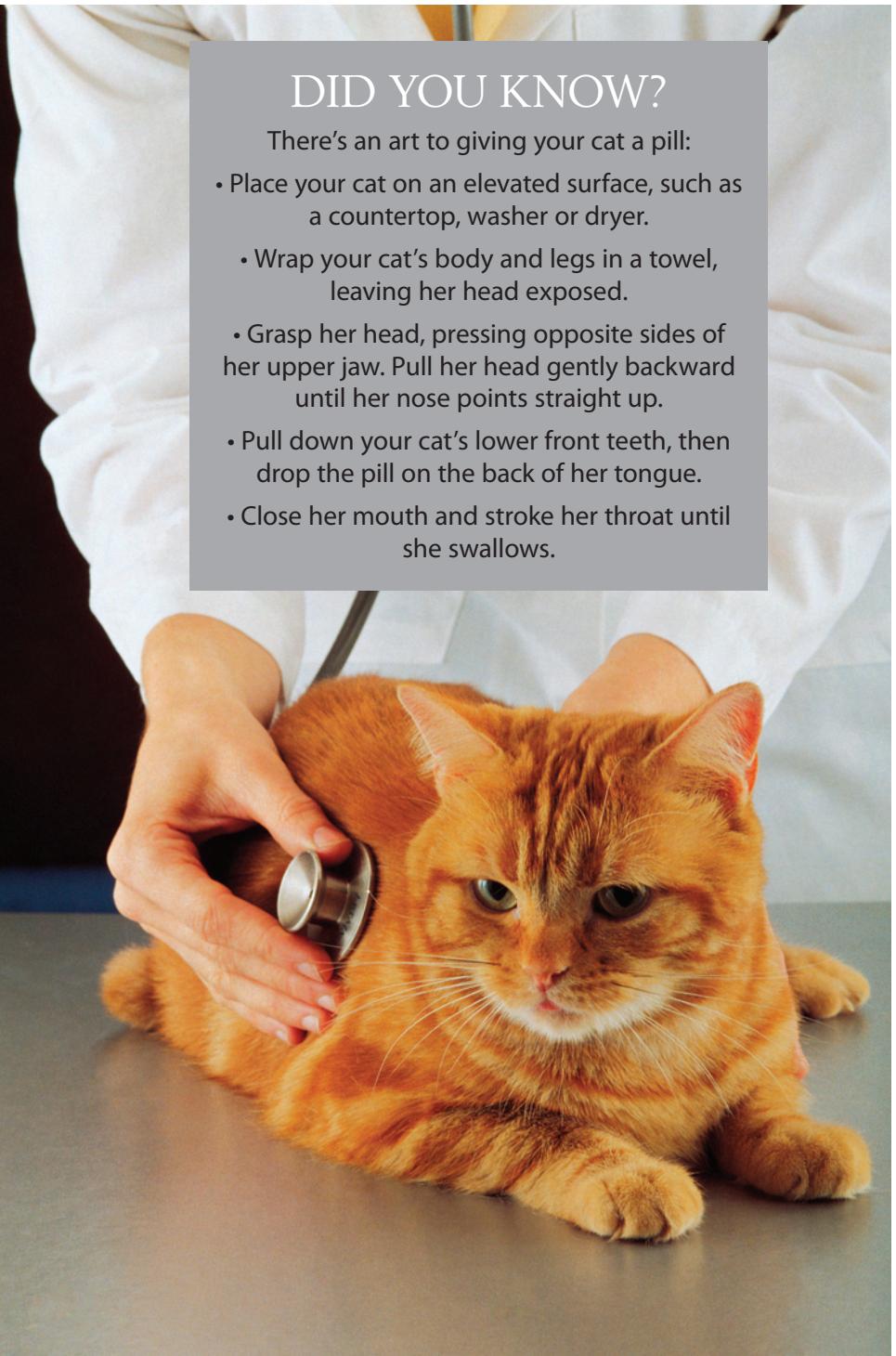
When you get a kitten, it's important to establish a relationship with a veterinarian right away. Regular visits should begin immediately.

- During your kitten's routine examinations, your veterinarian will:
  - Listen to her chest for heart and breath sounds.
  - Feel her abdomen.
  - Check the coat condition.
  - Inspect the eyes, ears and mouth.
  - Perform a dental checkup.
  - May examine the feces for worms and parasites (you may be asked to bring a stool sample).
- Because diseases are easily transmitted between pets, it's important to follow your veterinarian's recommended vaccination schedule. This is usually determined at the initial visit.
- Your cat should have an annual medical exam.
- If your veterinary clinic is not open for emergencies, ask for a recommendation for nearby care that is available 24/7. Familiarize yourself with the location in advance (don't go searching in the middle of a crisis) and keep the phone number and directions on file in case of emergency. Make sure everyone in the family is familiar with the information.

## Neutering: It's the right thing to do.

Neutering is a generic term which refers to the sterilization of male or female cats. Unless you have a purebred for breeding purposes, neutering is recommended. Millions of cats are euthanized each year because there are not enough homes for all of the unwanted pets. There are other positive reasons for neutering. A neutered cat:

- Has less desire to run away or roam in search of a mate.
- Makes a calmer, gentler, more affectionate pet.
- Avoids certain health risks related to the reproductive system.
- Is less concerned with marking their territory with urine.



## DID YOU KNOW?

There's an art to giving your cat a pill:

- Place your cat on an elevated surface, such as a countertop, washer or dryer.
- Wrap your cat's body and legs in a towel, leaving her head exposed.
- Grasp her head, pressing opposite sides of her upper jaw. Pull her head gently backward until her nose points straight up.
- Pull down your cat's lower front teeth, then drop the pill on the back of her tongue.
- Close her mouth and stroke her throat until she swallows.

# Kitten Care

## Taking Responsibility

Being a responsible pet owner means preventing your cat from wandering into your neighbor's yard to dig around in flowerbeds, to lounge on expensive lawn furniture or to deposit fleas. And being awakened at night by prowling, yowling males who want to mate is no fun either. So be a good pet neighbor and try not to allow your cat to become someone else's problem. Responsible ownership also includes spaying and neutering your pet to avoid unwanted kittens.

### Litter Box Training—Thinking Inside the Box

Most kittens will act instinctively in the litter box.

1. Just remember to allow privacy and quiet for elimination; if you interfere with your kitten while she's in her litter box, she may develop an aversion to it.
2. Always keep the box clean, remove soiled litter and change the litter at least once a week or more.
3. Place the box in a quiet location that your cat can access at all times.
4. In large homes, more than one litter box may be necessary.
5. If your kitten doesn't take to the litter box immediately, watch her carefully, especially when she wakes up and after meals. Place her in her box every time she shows signs of being ready to use it. Praise her lavishly when she's been good.



If your kitten gets into the habit of using another location instead of her litter box, it may be because the litter box is dirty, you've changed the type of litter, the location isn't appropriate, or there are not enough litter boxes for the number of cats in the home.

If this behavior continues, talk to your veterinarian to make sure it's not caused by a medical problem. Urinary tract disorders can cause pain, burning and a constant urge to urinate even when the bladder is not full. A cat with such a problem may be forced to pass a small amount of urine whenever and wherever the urge strikes. Such disorders should be treated by your veterinarian immediately.



### DID YOU KNOW?

If you own a purebred, you will need to fill out your own kitten registration papers and send them to the designated cat associations to register the kitten in your name. This is extremely important if you intend to show or breed your cat. Ask your breeder for information and instructions.

## How to keep normal behavior from becoming problem behavior:

**NIGHTTIME PLAY**—Since cats are nocturnal, your kitten may disturb you by playing at night. You can help alter this behavior by:

- playing with your kitten in the early evening to use up some of her excess energy.
- feeding her last meal early, since she'll probably get a burst of energy shortly after eating.

**TALKING**—Loud or constant meowing is commonly called "talking." If your kitten is lonely, anxious or has not had her play needs met, she may "talk" to get your attention.

- Answer her by giving her the love and attention she's craving.
- If neighbors tell you that she continues to "talk" while you are out, try leaving a radio playing softly to keep her company.
- It's important to keep her world fun and stimulating. Try rotating toys or providing boxes and bags to help keep her occupied.

**AGGRESSIVE PLAY**—When you allow your cat to nip and scratch at your hand during playtime, you're teaching her that hand biting is allowed.

- Never encourage aggressive play.
- If she tries to nip or scratch, disengage your hand by gently pushing toward her and making a loud noise to distract her (if you try to pull away, she'll hang on even more tightly).
- Give her toys instead of your hand. Leave her alone briefly until she has calmed down, then try playing with her again using a proper toy.
- If she continues to grab your hand, say "NO" in a stern voice and quietly leave the area.
- Never hit your kitten or squirt her with water. This can damage the bond you are establishing and may create fear and anxiety.
- If she doesn't respond to your stern voice and isolation, consult your veterinarian.

**HANDLING YOUR KITTEN**—Throughout your cat's life you will need to groom her, trim her claws, and perhaps give medication. This will be easier if your kitten is used to being handled.

- When your kitten is calm, perhaps just waking from a nap, gently run your hands over her feet and body while talking softly to her.
- Look into her ears and perhaps even open her mouth.
- Reward her with praise, petting and a tiny kibble of food.
- Keep the sessions short, ending before she gets agitated. This will help your kitten learn to trust you and allow you to care for her.

**IMPROVING BEHAVIOR**—Kittens and cats don't misbehave to make trouble. Their behavior is largely based on instinct and learning.

- Cats are sensitive to your tone of voice, so if you catch her acting inappropriately, clap your hands and say "NO", and that's usually enough to stop her.
- Some misbehavior occurs because your cat's needs are not being met. Be sure to provide diversions such as safe toys, a box, a crumpled piece of paper, or a plastic golf ball, and rotate toys often to keep them interesting.
- Providing a window perch or climbing tower will allow your cat to engage in normal climbing behaviors in an appropriate way.



# The Kitten Guide to Grooming

Grooming should be an essential part of your cat's life. She may resist at first, but if you reward her with kibbles and keep those initial sessions short, she will soon come to enjoy the extra holding and petting.

## Brushing and Combing

Grooming helps keep your cat healthy and beautiful. Start grooming right away so that it becomes part of your cat's usual routine.

You will need a flea comb for both a longhaired or shorthaired cat, but the type of brush depends on the length and texture of your cat's coat.

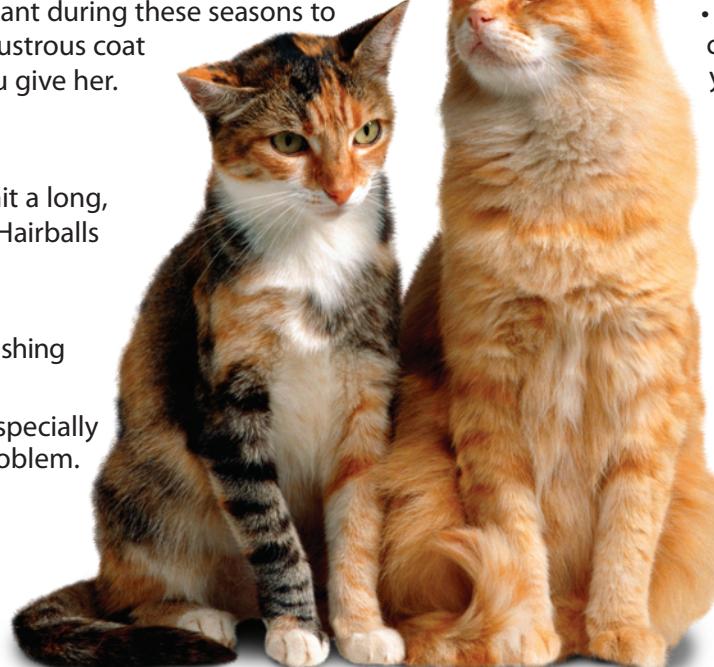
- For longhaired cats use a long-toothed metal comb and a stiff brush to manipulate the haircoat against the way it lays so it is fluffy when you finish. To help control shedding, longhaired cats should be groomed daily.
- For shorthaired cats use a soft rubber brush or hand mitt with short bristles. Shorthaired cats should be groomed at least once or twice a week to help control shedding.

A cat sheds to a certain degree all year long, with heavy shedding in the spring and fall. Grooming is especially important during these seasons to help rid your cat's coat of dead hair. A sleek, lustrous coat reflects the good nutrition and good care you give her.

## Hairballs

You may one day see (and hear) your cat vomit a long, dark mass made up of hair she has ingested. Hairballs are a problem that can beset both long- and short-haired cats.

- You can minimize hairballs by regularly brushing and combing your cat.
- If hairballs remain troublesome, look for specially formulated cat foods to help with this problem.
- Other hairball remedies are available at pet specialty stores.
- Your veterinarian can also offer other treatments.



## Bathing

Most cats do not like baths and don't really need them unless they have managed to get into some sort of trouble or are seriously infested with fleas.

- Kittens under six months of age are extremely susceptible to illness and should be bathed only if absolutely necessary.
- Always use a shampoo made especially for cats. Since cats clean their coats by licking, it's possible they could groom off chemicals that have been applied.

## Dental Care

Dental examinations should be done during your cat's regular veterinary check-up. Your veterinarian may also recommend a specially formulated dental food to promote healthier teeth and regular dental cleaning.

- Experts suggest cleaning your cat's teeth on a regular basis. Start by gently wiping the outer surface of her teeth with a gauze pad dipped in toothpaste especially formulated for cats.
- Ask your veterinarian or check at your pet store for pet-specific dental products.

## Claws

Your cat's claws will require occasional trimming.

- Never use scissors to trim your cat's claws. Use special cat clippers. Have your veterinarian or groomer show you how to handle them correctly to avoid cutting the vein in the claws. If you have any doubts, have your veterinarian or groomer do it. Many cats will tolerate short sessions of nail trimming, (one or two feet per session).

- The question of whether or not to declaw your cat is an important one that you should discuss with your veterinarian. With time, effort and proper placement of scratching posts, most cats can learn to leave owner possessions alone.

# Reservations About Traveling?

## Kitten Travel Tips

When planning a trip, one of the biggest decisions is whether to leave your cat at home or take her along. Consider your pet's personality and the length and distance of your trip when making your decision.

## Air Travel

If it's necessary to fly with your kitten or cat, keep in mind that regulations vary from airline to airline. You will find valuable air travel tips on the American Animal Hospital Association's web site for pet owners by visiting <http://www.healthypet.com>. Then go to the Search function and enter Air Travel.

## Leaving Your Cat Behind

If you decide to leave your cat behind, here are some general tips:

- Ask your veterinarian, groomer or other pet owners to recommend reputable boarding facilities or pet sitters. Visit the facility to meet the people and check the safety and cleanliness of the operation.
- If hiring a pet sitter, meet the sitter in your home to see how he or she and your pet interact.
- Leave feeding instructions, medications and a supply of your cat's regular food. If leaving your pet with a sitter, discuss your pet's routine, including playtime.
- Be sure your cat wears a collar with identification tags.
- Leave information about your veterinarian, including office and emergency numbers.
- Be sure to leave a number where you can be reached.

## Taking Your Cat Along for the Ride

Call ahead to be sure your cat will be welcome at the hotels, motels, homes or parks where you will be staying.

- If you are including your cat in your travel plans, get her acclimated to her carrier and accustomed to riding in the car in advance.



- Don't forget her litter box, cat box filler and scoop.
- If space permits, bring along her scratching post, bed and some of her favorite toys.
- Cats may get upset stomachs when traveling, so avoid feeding just before leaving. If your trip is short, wait to feed her until shortly after arriving. For longer trips, provide a snack and plenty of water.
- Be sure your cat has a collar with an identification tag containing your name and telephone number (including area code). A photo of your pet is important in case she gets lost.
- Never leave your cat loose in a hotel room when you are not there. Keep your cat confined to her carrier for those brief periods when you are away, and check on her frequently.
- When taking her outside, keep her on a leash or securely inside her carrier.
- NEVER leave a cat confined in a car in warmer weather—even for a few minutes. The temperature inside a closed car rises quickly. A cat's circulatory and respiratory systems can become quickly overtaxed to the point where permanent damage or death may occur.

For additional information about traveling by car with your kitten or cat, visit <http://www.healthypet.com>. Then go to the Search function and enter Car Travel.

