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# Catnip - Nepeta Cataria

Nepeta is a genus of about 250 species of flowering plants in the family Lamiaceae. The members of this group are known as catnip or "catmint" because of their effect on cats— nepeta pleasantly stimulates cats' pheromone receptors, typically resulting in temporary euphoria— or a state of happiness. Catnip is also used in herbal medicine for their mild sedative effect on humans.

## Infomation[]

The genus is native to Europe, Asia, and Africa. It is now also common in North America. Most of the species are herbaceous perennial plants, but some are annuals. They have sturdy stems with opposite heart-shaped, green to grayish-green leaves. The flowers are white, blue, pink or lilac and occur in several clusters toward the tip of the stems. The flowers are tubular and spotted with tiny purple dots. The most commonly found Catmint is Nepeta cataria, roughly 50% of cats are affected by the herb, and even big cats are known to favor it.

## Effect on Cats[]

When cats come into contact with catnip, particularly Nepeta cataria, their behavior can undergo noticeable changes. The active compound responsible for this reaction is called nepetalactone, which interacts with cats' olfactory system.

When cats encounter catnip, they may exhibit various behaviors, including rolling, rubbing, purring, jumping, and playful activity. Some cats may become more vocal or engage in seemingly euphoric behaviors, such as leaping and frolicking. It is not uncommon for cats to show heightened curiosity and explore their surroundings with increased enthusiasm. These responses are believed to be triggered by the scent of catnip, as cats actively sniff, lick, or chew on the plant.

The effect of catnip on cats is temporary and typically lasts for about 10 to 15 minutes. After this period, cats may lose interest in the catnip or exhibit a more subdued behavior. It is worth noting that not all cats respond to catnip in the same way. Sensitivity to catnip is hereditary, and approximately 50% of cats have a strong reaction to it, while others may show little to no response.

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