

# Basic Cat Care Guide

Congrats on adopting a cat! Fun fact: The oldest known cat in history lived to be 38! To keep your new furry friend happy and healthy, we've put together this basic guide!

## Veterinary Care

Prior to adopting your cat, we spayed/neutered, SNAP tested (to check for FIV/FeLV), and got him or her the basic vaccines (Rabies and FVRCP). We should have furnished you with a copy of his medical records. If not, please remind us.

In general, we recommend the following:

- At minimum, a **yearly** wellness exam consisting of a physical exam, bloodwork, a urine test, a fecal test, and any necessary vaccine boosters.
  - As your cat ages, however, this ideally could increase to 2 exams a year as well as a yearly dental cleaning. If your cat is FIV+, regular dental cleanings at an earlier age are highly recommended.
  - I also like to redo SNAP tests every few years but this is something you should discuss with your veterinarian.
- **Microchipping your cat.** (We typically do this prior to adoption and add your contact information to the microchip). In the off chance that this hasn't happened (highly unlikely and we will explicitly inform you), we suggest you ask your primary care veterinarian to do this. We highly recommend this in the event that your cat is ever lost and finds himself or herself rescued or in a shelter.
- Be aware, also, of the possibility of 3 year vaccines in lieu of 1 year vaccines. Ask your veterinarian for more information.
- **Monthly de-parasite treatments.** We primarily recommend **Revolution**, which you can obtain from your veterinarian. Please note that dosage/brand/type is **CRITICAL** when it comes to these treatments. Certain low-cost store bought brands (like Haartz) has been known to have adverse side effects. Treatments for dogs **CANNOT** be used for cats either and will result in neurological damage.
  - Some may consider this less vital for indoor-only pets, but we suggest you discuss this with your primary care veterinarian.

We also suggest that you find a **1 primary care veterinarian** for your kitty as well as be aware of **1 24-hour veterinary hospital** nearby just in case of emergency. In NYC, Blue Pearl Vet and the Animal Medical Center are two such 24 hour facilities:

- (1) <http://bluepearlvet.com/locations/newyork/newyork-hospitals/> (multiple locations)
- (2) <http://www.amcny.org/> (510 E. 62nd, New York, NY 10065)

They can be pricey, however, so if not an emergency, try to get an exam with your primary care vet. This is actually another HUGE advantage to having a regular primary care veterinarian; most will respond to email or a quick phone call. (Note that both of these hospitals also have specialists as well.)

#### Useful links:

- (1) Very thorough guide to cat care: <http://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/cat-care>
- (2) <http://www.petmd.com/blogs/thedailyvet/lhouston/2012/dec/veterinary-care-for-your-new-cat-29565>

### **Affording Veterinary Care**

Veterinary care can be expensive!

The basic wellness exam we mentioned above is typically ~\$100 and bloodwork/urine/fecal tests are slightly extra. Unforeseen emergency visits may also vary in cost!

So we want you to be aware of a few possibilities:

- Wellness Plans. Certain veterinary clinics have yearly wellness plans which bundle together a variety of services (exam, blood test, urine test, etc) for a set price. Ask your veterinarian if this is an option. Two hospitals with such plans are Banfield Vet (<http://www.banfield.com/>) and VCA Hospital (<http://www.vcahospitals.com/>).
- Pet Insurance Though veterinary insurance does not cover wellness care, it can come in handy in the event of catastrophic illness or accidents. Note that coverage, deductibles, and non-coverage of preexisting conditions differ between the different plans.
  - I personally use Health Paws (<http://www.healthypawspetinsurance.com/>) but others include:
  - Trupanion: <http://trupanion.com/>
  - VPI: <http://www.petinsurance.com/>
- Care Credit: Some veterinarians accept Care Credit, a very high interest rate credit card, essentially, that can be used for medical purposes.

Often estimating wellness care and planning ahead of time alone can also go a long way! :)

### **Home Safety**

Yay! Now that you have a new family member who can jump pretty much anywhere, please be cognizant of any potential dangers in the home:

- **Make sure window screens are in place!** High rise syndrome is a very real danger in urban settings, so also be careful if you have a balcony or terrace.

- **Always have a cat carrier in an easily accessible location** in case of emergency. This goes without saying. Often leaving a cat carrier out will help kitty feel as though it is a safe space and make it easier to stick him in it for future travel.
- Tuck away any loose electrical cords, strings, string-like things, especially if you are adopting a younger cat or kitten.
- **Be careful with houseplants!** Many cats (and dogs) like to nibble on houseplants and many harmless looking flowers or plants can be very toxic if consumed.
  - **Be especially wary of certain breeds of lilies.** Even if not consumed, the pollen can be toxic and result in kidney failure (especially if the pollen gets on the fur and kitty grooms himself unknowingly).
- **Be careful with certain foods!** Alcohol, caffeine, grapes and chocolate are fairly toxic to cats (along with other items). Please make sure that your cat doesn't consume them. If in doubt, google it or ask your veterinarian.

The **ASPCA has a pet poison control hotline** that you can call in the event of an emergency or if Mr. Kitty eats an unknown or sketchy plant or substance:

<http://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control>

“If you think your pet may have ingested a potentially poisonous substance, call **(888) 426-4435**. A \$65 consultation fee may be applied to your credit card.”

## **Diet**

There are many diets out there (grain-free, raw, single protein, dry, wet) and this is something I believe every cat parent should discuss with their veterinarian. Diets can also differ based on if your cat has a sensitive stomach or a medical condition.

But the #1 most important thing I can suggest is that **YOU DO NOT CHANGE THE DIET SUDDENLY**. This can lead to diarrhea and stomach upset. If Mr. Kitty's food needs to be changed, do so gradually - incrementally mixing in the new foods in with the old until you have completely switched over.

Also - remember to regularly clean your cat's food and water bowls! :)

## **Playtime & Behavior**

Cats are high-intensity, sprinting predators by nature. Meaning that, although they might not want to go for long walks, they exercise in short bursts of energy. I typically have two play sessions with my cat every day - once before work and once in the evening (which helps to ensure he sleeps through the night) totaling around 30 minutes! Often adopting a cat friend for single cats is also a good idea.

I also find that having various climbing surfaces (shelves, cat trees, cardboard boxes they can hide in) also provide both hiding places, a sense of safety, and a fun play structure in which cats can burn off excess energy.

And lastly, cats by nature like to scratch things to mark their territory! In the wild, this often includes trees, fallen branches, etc. In the home, however, a variety of scratching posts or cardboard scratches will provide a nice safe way to allow your cat to mark his or her spot and feel right at home.

## **Litterbox**

When dropping your new adopted kitty off, we will either bring a litterbox or inform you of his litterbox preferences! There are a variety of litter brands as well as litterbox styles (covered, large, high sides, low sides, etc). Be cognizant of your cat's size and preferences.

Though many options exist the two most important things we suggest are:

- (1) **Consistency:** Do not suddenly move litterboxes after they have been in a particular location. Move them gradually. Try to also gradually introduce a new litter type.
- (2) **Adequate # of litterboxes:** Have (# of cats in household + 1) litterboxes. We understand this may be harder in small NYC apartments so use your judgement! But really, if there are more than 2 cats in the household, 1 litterbox is typically not sufficient.
- (3) **Security:** If there are pups or other animals in the household, make sure kitty feels safe and secure when entering and exiting the litterbox and cannot be cornered.
- (4) **Clean regularly:** No one likes a dirty bathroom :) Scoop daily and try to rinse with warm soapy water every month or two. We warn against using bleach or strong smelling substances to clear litterboxes however; cats are very sensitive to smells.