

KEEP YOUR CAT INDOORS

Many of our rescue cats were discovered outside after having been abandoned or living the rough street life. These cats are ready to enjoy the rest of their lives in indoor comfort. Keeping your cat inside protects them from further dangers and trauma. Outdoor cats are subjected to the dangers of traffic, poisonous substances, injuries from other animals and cruelty from humans, and diseases. By allowing your adopted rescue cat to go outside, chances increase of them getting ill, attacked, or lost.

SIGNS YOUR CAT MAY BE SICK

Cats are creatures of habit and routine, so if something seems “off” or unusual for your cat, it might be sign to take them to the vet.

Consider the following questions:

Are there changes to eating or drinking?

Warning signs include:

- Appetite loss — appetite loss for more than two days can be dangerous
- Weight loss despite a good appetite
- Drinking far more than normal

Are there changes to your cat’s normal behaviour?

Indications of medical conditions include:

- Suddenly meowing all night
- Eliminating outside the litter box
- Lethargic and unusually sleepy
- Vomiting and/or diarrhea

Are there physical changes?

Signs include:

- Lumps
- Drooling
- Swollen gums
- Limping
- Runny eyes or nose
- Congestion

If your cat is showing signs of distress take them to the emergency vet immediately.

This information is provided for reference only and should not be substituted for medical advice from your veterinarian.

Action Volunteers for Animals (AVA) is an all-volunteer-run charitable animal rescue dedicated to helping stray and feral animals live healthy and happy lives.

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avacats.org



Health and Nutrition



The information provided here is designed to help you prepare and welcome your new feline companion into your home and life

Cat health and safety is our top priority at AVA. We want our feline friends to live their best lives possible and that starts with health and nutrition. As with humans, the best way for cats to keep in good shape is through good nutrition, daily exercise, and regular medical check-ups.

Use these tips to give your rescue cat a chance at the life they deserve.

NUTRITION

What to Feed

Cats are obligate carnivores, which means they need most of their calories from animal protein. When choosing food for your cats, look for high-quality brands that has named animal protein, like chicken or turkey, as the top ingredients. Avoid foods with byproducts, fillers, and carbohydrates like corn, which often add empty calories and a less digestible form of protein.

Cats also need lots of moisture in their food. As most cats are not prolific water drinkers, it's vital that they have moisture-rich canned food as part of their diet. Wet food helps to keep cats properly hydrated and to prevent health problems like urinary tract infections and kidney disease.

Calorie counting is a key factor in maintaining your cat's weight. The average calorie intake for cats is about 200 calories per day, or 20 calories per one pound of weight for an indoor cat. Specific dietary needs may vary, so always ask your veterinary team to help you calculate your cat's needs.

Cats love treats and it's a temptation to feed them lots of what they love. However, treats should be no more than 10% of your adult cat's daily calories, and no more than 5% of your kitten's daily nutrient intake. If you want to reward your cat with treats, try a healthier option like freeze-dried meats and proteins.

When to Feed

In the wild, cats naturally eat several small meals throughout the day — anywhere between 5 and 15— depending on when they catch their prey. Their small stomachs empty quickly, so we recommend several small meals. Focus on wet food at dawn and dusk (breakfast and dinner), when they are most active in their hunting cycle.

Supplement other meals with wet and/or dry kibble as you learn your cat's ideal daily maintenance diet and eating habits. High-quality dry kibble will not spoil if left out and gives your cat a snack to graze on while you're out.

Fresh water is essential! Cats will drink when they are thirsty. On average, a cat that weighs about 4kg (8 lbs) needs about 75–240 mls (1/3–1 cup) of water per day. Using metal or ceramic bowls, provide each cat clean, fresh water every day. If your cat likes to drink directly from the sink or tub tap, try giving them a water fountain specially designed for cats. Keep the fountain clean and filled with fresh water.

Cats are naturally curious animals and may express interest in human foods and ingredients. Be aware that there are some foods that can be dangerous, poisonous, or lethal to cats. Cats can also develop sensitivities or allergies to different ingredients. Consult with your veterinarian about your individual cat's dietary needs to address concerns and avoid prolonged distress.

Foods to Avoid

Keep your cat safe and healthy — store these potentially toxic foods in a secure location well out of cat's reach:

- **Chocolate, dark chocolate, unsweetened baking chocolate**
- **Xylitol**
- **Onions, garlic and chives**
- **Grapes and raisins**
- **Caffeine or coffee grounds**
- **Alcohol**

Some ingredients or foods may not be fatal if consumed by cats but may pose hazards:

- **Milk** – Many cats can't process lactose; consuming milk/milk-based foods can result in vomiting and/or diarrhea
- **Canned tuna** – Tuna sold for humans does not have all the nutrients a cat needs
- **Table scraps** – Bones and fat can be dangerous, potential choking hazards
- **Dog food** – Food prepared for dogs does not have all the nutrients a cat needs

EXERCISE

Daily physical and mental exercise are essential to a cat's health and well-being. Obesity in cats will develop when their caloric intake exceeds energy requirements, or overfeeding coupled with lack of exercise. Without an adjustment in diet *and* exercise, the cat may remain obese even after stopping their excessive caloric intake. Obesity is associated with health issues including diabetes, arthritis, and urinary tract disease.

The best way to avoid obesity is by engaging in active playtime. Aim for 20-30 minutes a day for adult cats and 40-60 minutes a day for kittens. Interactive toys are best, since you can mimic the actions of a mouse or bird. Puzzles and other games are also excellent for mental stimulation.

Play Tips

- Engage in at least two, 10-minute interactive play sessions for adult cats.
- Toys with pieces that can be chewed or swallowed (string, feathers, or small plastic bits), should only be used under supervision and put away after playtime.
- Hands are not toys! Discourage kittens and cats from playing with your hands or feet, redirecting their energy to an appropriate toy.

REGULAR VET CHECKUPS

Even though indoor cats may not be exposed to as many health hazards as outdoor cats, they still benefit from regular vet visits. Like humans, indoor cats aren't immune to illnesses like diabetes, kidney disease, dental problems, and arthritis. Unlike humans, cats age at a different rate and are experts at masking signs of illness. Annual wellness exams will give your vet an idea of your cat's normal behaviours and weight fluctuations, and together you can assess the cat's general health and address any underlying health conditions before they become problematic.

Keeping your cat up-to-date on core vaccines such as Rabies and FVRCP (Feline Rhinotracheitis-Calciivirus-Panleukopenia Virus) will help protect them from many airborne diseases.