



## **Helpful Suggestions For Feeding Your Kitten**

Start healthy feeding habits as soon as you get your kitten! Excellent nutrition will influence your kitten's health status, development, appearance and attitude. How you feed your kitten will also help prevent excess weight gain during the growth stage and help reduce the likelihood of obesity as your kitten matures. Nutritional excellence is a key component of wellness medicine, where the goal is to prevent rather than treat health problems later in life. The following tips will get you off to a good start.

### **1. Choose your kitten's diet carefully**

There is excessive and confusing information in the market regarding kitten foods. The old adage "you get what you pay for" applies particularly well to pet foods. We encourage you not to compare foods by the "Guaranteed Analysis" on the label. This is based on a chemical analysis only and measures gross quantities of ingredient classes- it tells you nothing about the quality or digestibility of the ingredients. Highly digestible kitten foods mean you feed less. It is typical to be looking at feeding your kitten from \$0.25-\$1.00/ day (depending on age, and canned and dry proportions).

Be sure to feed your kitten a diet that has successfully completed and AAFCO growth trial.

### **2. Benefits of excellent nutrition**

The diet we recommend is of exceptional quality. We expect your kitten to have a luxurious, shiny coat, to be bright and lively, have strong health teeth and gums, and make a small, well-formed stool. Superior nutrition will help kittens build bone, muscle and tissue, and boost their immune system to help fight disease.

### **3. Feed your kitten as an individual**

Feed your kitten frequent, small meals if possible. Your kitten has a small stomach, and high energy needs. You can leave small quantities of dry food out constantly and let your kitten “nibble on the kibble” as desired. Monitor your kitten’s weight/appearance. You should see a lean, well-conditioned body, and be able to feel but not see, its ribs. Adjustments in the amount of food left out may be necessary to prevent your kitten from becoming overweight, particularly between 4 and 9 months of age.

### **4. Avoid feeding your kitten “human food”**

Establishing right from the start that “human food” is off-limits will reduce begging and the tendency towards obesity. It also minimizes the chance of cats becoming very picky eaters. If you are compelled to give some human food, stick to small amounts of cooked lean meat, and always put them in your kitten’s bowl. Never feed your kitten from the counter or the table.

### **5. Feed some canned food**

While you may prefer to feed kittens dry food, always give them some canned food (even just a tablespoon a day). Cats are very sensitive to “mouth feel” of the products they eat. As cats age, they sometimes develop medical conditions that are better managed by increasing their water intake. Feeding canned food is the best way to do this. Cats that have never been exposed to canned foods as kittens often refuse to eat them later in life, when they may be extremely beneficial.

### **6. Where to feed your kitten**

Feed your kitten in a quiet place. This helps establish consistency, reduces excitement around a meal, and helps reduce the incidence of stomach upset. Ensure that the feeding area is not in close proximity to the litter box- it may interfere with litter box training.

## **7. Measure the food, and feed in your kitten's own bowl**

Always measure your kitten's food so that you can make appropriate adjustments as necessary depending on your kitten's body condition. If you have other cats in your home, feed the kitten separately, from its own bowl. Kitten foods are formulated to be optimum for growing kittens, you do not want your adult cats eating kitten food, and vice versa. Dry diets can be moistened to soften them for very young kittens.

## **8. Change diets slowly**

If you are changing your kitten's diet, mix the new food with the previous diet in small amounts the first day or two. Then the proportions of the new diet can be gradually increased over 5 to 7 days until your kitten is completely on the new diet. This will reduce the likelihood of vomiting and diarrhea. Your kitten should make a formed stool that is easy to scoop up. Please inform us if this is not the case.

## **9. Milk**

Cow's milk is not recommended for kittens. In fact, many kittens cannot digest milk, and get diarrhea as a result. All your kitten needs to drink is fresh, clean water.

## **10. Treats**

More and more of us are enjoying the use of treats to socialize, train, and just plain love our kittens. Ask us about healthy, low calorie treat for your kitten. Treats can be moistened to soften them for very young kittens.

## **11. How long should I feed kitten food?**

Your kitten should be fed kitten food exclusively until 9 to 12 months of age. This will help optimize bone and soft tissue development. Adult cat foods are often more urine acidifying and restricted in minerals- this could interfere with optimum bone development in growing kittens.

**Best of luck with your new kitten! Please call with any questions that you may have regarding your kitten's health.**