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Common Causes Of Allergies In Cats

Most Toxic Foods For Fifi

Calming Techniques For All Energy Levels

Myth Buster: Can You Really Train A Cat To Walk On A Leash?

Next Issue: Kitty Dental

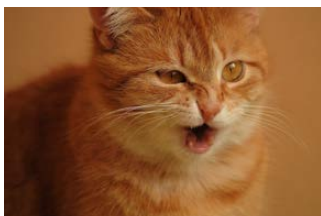


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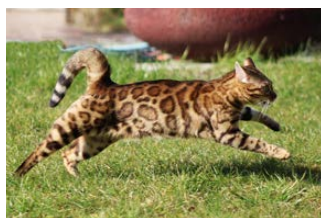
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COMMON CAUSES OF ALLERGIES IN CATS

Does your cat ever seem to sneeze and/or spend a lot of time scratching him or herself? If so, they most likely have allergies. Unlike a human, your feline friend isn't capable of knowing what's going on and taking steps to stop it. Therefore, unless you help your kitty out, he or she is going to keep having the same issue.

The first thing you should know is that no, your cat doesn't enjoy scratching herself all day. This means that unless you take action, your cat's quality of life will suffer.

MOST COMMON ALLERGIC REACTIONS

Before we get into what causes their allergies, let's take a look at what type of reaction your cat might have.

- Excessive grooming (licking)
- Scratching
- Biting or pulling out fur
- Chewing at a body part or their paws
- Dry, red, and/or flaky skin
- Ear infections

- Runny, itchy eyes
- Diarrhea or vomiting
- Swollen, sensitive paws
- Snoring (due to inflammation in their throat)

As you can imagine, none of these are fun to deal with. In fact, if your cat is dealing with some of them right now, it may help explain why he keeps being standoffish and/or extra clingy.

Imagine for a moment that you've got some of the symptoms listed above. How miserable would you have to be to begin pulling out your own hair? Well, that should give you a clue as to how miserable your cat is, too.

TYPES OF ALLERGIES

Now, let's hone in on specific types of allergies.

Flea Allergy

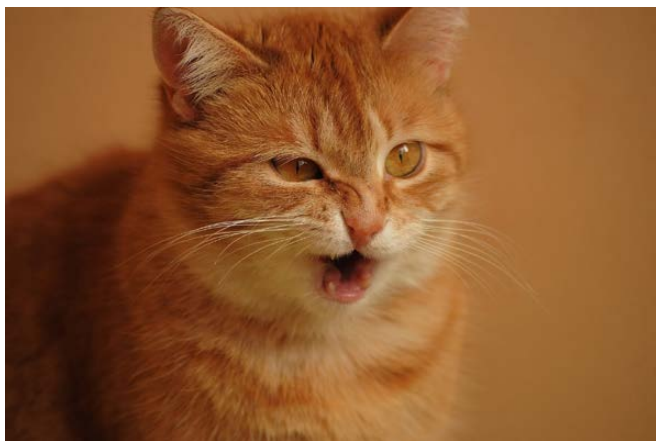
Fleas are always an issue, but if your cat happens to be allergic to their bite, then they're going to have a big issue. Most pets find them annoying, but they're

able to deal with having fleas. However, if your kitty has an allergy to them, it's only going to take a couple of bites to make your buddy feel incredibly sensitive throughout the affected area.

Even worse, once a flea administers its bite, your cat is going to feel it all over, as opposed to just at the bite site. This is, quite simply, a completely miserable experience that will bring your kitty down. And unless you take steps to vanquish their tiny enemies, they're going to end up dealing with a full blown allergic flare-up.

The best way to prevent this is to keep your cat from getting fleas in the first place. Keep them inside, and if you have any other pets who move between the inside and outside, keep them separated until you're able to check for fleas. Ask your veterinarian what type of flea preventing medication will work best with your specific cat's health profile. Make sure you get it and use it all-year round if there's even a slight chance your cat could get fleas.

Environmental Allergies



It sure looks weird when a cat sneezes, right? The good news is that this is relatively normal, as long as it doesn't happen all the time. In fact, there are seven common causes for a cat to sneeze.

- External irritation
- Foreign materials
- Upper respiratory infection
- Dental disease
- Bacterial infection
- Neoplasia (tumors)
- Fungal infection

We'll return to these in a few minutes to discuss them in more detail, but first, it's important to take a closer look at your cat's environment to figure out what may be causing them to scratch or sneeze.

When it comes to environmental allergies, it can really come from almost anywhere. The most common causes of an allergic reaction include exposure to fungi, grass, pollen, dust, and mold. Additionally, your kitty could also have difficulty being around perfume, cleaning products, air fresheners, and cigarette smoke.

Food Allergies

Suffering from a food allergy is the third most common allergic reaction a cat can have. Just like humans, felines can be allergic to a wide variety of food products, and it can be extremely difficult to narrow it down. I once had a cat who was allergic to peas, and if you know anything about cat food, you know that this is a pretty common ingredient.

So, how did I know that she was allergic to peas? Well, this was an allergy that came on suddenly. One day, my kitty was happily munching on the same kibble she'd eaten her entire life. The next, her stomach was all red. The first thing I tried was replacing her kibble, and it just so happened that the new bag didn't have any pea products in it. Her stomach began to clean up, and she was much peppier.

Later on, I accidentally gave her some food with peas in it again and, sure enough, her stomach turned red again. This made it rather obvious what she was allergic to, which made it much easier to feed her going forward. If your kitty has a food allergy, you may have to go through many more steps than I did to figure out what he or she is actually allergic to.

HOW ARE CAT ALLERGIES DIAGNOSED?

Unless you get super lucky like I did, a diagnosis will generally be given by a veterinary dermatologist. They will give your feline a physical exam, plus they'll review their medical records. If you think they have an environmental allergy, there is a test that can be performed. Otherwise, it may be a bit harder to pinpoint the cause.

When a vet is concerned about a possible food allergy, they'll generally use the 'weed it out' method. In other words, they'll have you give your cat his or her normal food first, then begin feeding different foods with one ingredient excluded. You'll continue working with your kitten until one specific ingredient stands out as the culprit.

Overall, the best way to treat cat allergies is with prevention. Any cleaners, foods, medications, plants, etc. that can be avoided should be. If you have to use some of these items, be sure not to use them directly in your cat's space. In fact, it's best if you're at least a room away from them while using any irritants.

WHAT ABOUT ASTHMA?



Cat asthma works very similarly to human asthma. It is caused by chronic inflammation of the lungs' airways. An attack can be triggered by allergens or stress, which means that you have to treat your kitty's allergies and help them de-stress. An estimated 1–5% of cats will get asthma, and it is typically diagnosed when a feline is between the ages of two and eight.

Fortunately, there are several different ways you can tell if your cat has asthma.

Heavy/Rapid Breathing

When your cat is resting, their typical heartbeat will be 25–30 per minute. If your cat's heartbeat is at 40 or more beats per minute while they're resting, this could be an indicator of asthma.

Lethargy/Fatigue

Does your cat seem more fatigued than usual after a round of play? Their lethargy could be a sign of low blood oxygen.

Panting/Breathing Through Their Mouth

Because of how uncomfortable asthma can be, you may notice that your feline is breathing through their mouth and/or panting. This is an attempt to take in more air.

Cat Asthma Attack Symptoms

If your cat experiences the following, it indicates that they likely have asthma and are currently having an attack.

- Sitting in a squatted position with their neck extended
- Blue gums and lips
- Wheezing
- Hacking/coughing

Causes Of Cat Asthma

The common causes of an asthma attack are very similar to those that a cat dealing with an allergy goes through. These include:

- Mold
- Cigarette smoke
- Grass
- Dust
- Household chemicals
- Pollen
- Aerosol sprays
- Perfume
- Pre-existing health issues/illnesses

If one of these triggers affects your cat, you'll know about it within a few minutes. All cat breeds and genders can get asthma, although it seems to be most common in the Siamese and Himalayan breeds.

WHY DO CATS SNEEZE?



Now let's go back and take a closer look at the environmental allergies your cat may be exposed to.

External Irritation

Noxious smells, toxins, etc. are what most people think of when they hear the term “external irritation,” and yes, it does cover these things. However, it also means cooking spices, household cleaning products, essential oils, and other seemingly inconspicuous household items.

What may not bother us at all could be the cause of extreme discomfort to your feline companion. Please avoid letting your cat be exposed to as many of these things as possible.

And, please, stop using essential oils if you have a cat. When the essential oil hits the air (typically through a diffuser), it can collect on your cat's fur. Then, once it's grooming time, your cat will ingest the oil while grooming him or herself.

If your feline friend is allergic to one or more essential oils, they may display several symptoms such as:

- Watery eyes or nose
- Burning sensation in their throat/nose
- Nausea
- Drooling
- Vomiting
- Difficulty breathing
- Panting
- Coughing
- Wheezing

- Tremors
- Wobbliness
- Respiratory distress
- Low heart rate
- Low body temperature
- Liver failure

If your cat has a reaction to essential oils, you must move him or her to a room with fresh air for a while. If this doesn't help, they'll need to go to an emergency veterinarian.

There are several types of essential oil that are known to cause issues in cats. These include:

- Wintergreen
- Sweet birch
- Citrus oils
- Pine oils
- Ylang ylang
- Peppermint
- Cinnamon
- Pennyroyal
- Clove
- Eucalyptus
- Tea tree

Your best bet is to avoid letting your cats be exposed to any essential oils.

Foreign Material



Cats are curious, and as such, they might accidentally get foreign materials stuck in their nose. Their natural reaction is to sneeze it out, but

if that doesn't work, take them to the vet. Foreign materials may include:

- Grass and grass seeds, lint, or hair
- Pollen and other allergens
- Dust, smoke, and other airborne particles

Upper Respiratory Infections

Has your cat been sneezing more than normal? He or she most likely has an upper respiratory infection (URI). The most common URI is caused by Feline Herpesvirus (FHV). It is estimated that an astounding 80–90% of all cats alive today are FHV carriers.

When your cat becomes stressed out or immunosuppressed, the FHV infection has the ability to re-emerge. Although there are some treatment options, there is no cure for FHV.

Cats that have an upper respiratory infection typically exhibit these symptoms:

- Repeated sneezing (spread out over several hours)
- Recurrent coughing or problems swallowing
- Irregular discharge from their nose or eyes (yellow, green, or bloody)
- Fever and/or lethargy
- Diarrhea
- Decreased appetite and/or dehydration
- Enlarged lymph nodes

NOTE: Because some of the symptoms are similar, your cat may have influenza or the Calicivirus, instead. Only a vet can tell for sure.

Dental Disease

Are you surprised to learn that dental issues can cause your feline buddy to begin sneezing? The reality is that if they have a root infection, they're probably going to sneeze more than usual. And if your cat is suffering from a root infection, they're in serious pain. If you have any reason to suspect that this is the problem, take them to their vet ASAP.

Bacterial Infections

If there's a green or yellow discharge coming from your cat's eyes or nose—and they've been sneezing a lot—they've got a bacterial infection. What's worse, though, is that a bacterial infection usually accompanies a respiratory virus and/or some other known medical condition that affects your kitty's nasal passages.

Tumors

Also known as neoplasia, this is a condition that affects some cats, particularly if they're older. These cancerous cells will grow inside their nasal passages, which causes inflammation and irritation. Sadly, cats that are diagnosed with neoplasia of the nose do not have a very good prognosis.

Fungal Infections



The seventh, and final, reason that cats may be sneezing more than usual are fungal infections. It's relatively uncommon when compared with the other six items on this list, but it can still happen. Cryptococcus is the most common cause of a fungal infection in your kitty. Fortunately, it's not cordyceps, which is the zombie-ant fungus that inspired *The Last of Us*.

The symptoms of cryptococcus are:

- Sneezing
- Polyps in the nasal passages
- Hard swelling over the bridge of the nose
- Nasal discharge (may be yellow, blood-tinged, clear, or a combo of pus and mucus)

Less common symptoms include:

- Rapid labored breathing
- Coughing
- Skin lesions
- Large ulcers on the skin

Other symptoms that may occur if your cat's central nervous system has been affected:

- Depression
- Behavioral changes
- Walking in circles
- Seizures
- Muscular weakness

Where does a cat pick up cryptococcosis? He or she inhales spores that can be found in bird guano, decaying wood, and soil. The good news is that if your cat never goes outside, then he or she is safe from getting cryptococcosis.

Be aware that receiving fast treatment is the key. Most cats will need to be treated for an extended time, anywhere from four to nine months. Fortunately, they can't spread the cryptococcus fungus to humans or other cats. Although there is a cure for this condition, it can potentially become lethal if treatment is delayed and it has already affected multiple organs or the central nervous system.

WHY IS MY CAT SNEEZING MORE THAN NORMAL?

There are numerous reasons that your feline friend could be sneezing. Therefore, ask yourself if it could be a common irritant like perfume or dust.

- Is sneezing occurring around the same time each day?
- Does it only happen in a specific room or during specific activities?
- Are you using new kitty litter? Is it scented or dusty?
- Are you using any new products in your home?
- Do you need to do a vigorous spring cleaning/dusting?

These are ways that you can narrow down what might be irritating your feline's nose. For instance, if it only happens during a specific activity, then you need to remove your cat from the area where that activity happens. Or, if you've brought home a new household cleaner, that could easily be the culprit. You could also just have a dusty house, and if you go through and dust everything, you may notice that your kitty stops sneezing.

FINAL THOUGHTS

It's rather common for cats and allergies to go hand in hand. In the past, I had a cat that was allergic to pine trees, which meant that I couldn't open the windows for a few months out of every year.

You see, there are TONS of pine trees in my neighborhood, and my feline buddy simply couldn't handle having them around, especially when they were in their growing season. She was even on allergy medication, and it still didn't completely fix the problem. Shutting my doors and windows was very helpful, though.

By the way, if you're wondering how common it is for a cat to have an allergy, I've had four cats as an adult. Three of them had allergies. But if you don't pay close enough attention to your feline, you might never know what they're battling against.

Therefore, we recommend that you spend at least 10–15 minutes of time with your cat on a daily basis (30+ minutes is better, but it may need to be broken up). Put away your cell phone and simply engage with them! There is so much you can learn this way.



You want to treat your kitty the right way, and this includes omitting certain foods from your cat's life. For instance, most cats will come running for some cheese, but if you give them too much of it, they're not going to have a happy belly. In fact, cheese is one of the eight toxic foods for cats, so that's exactly where we are going to start!

8 MOST TOXIC HUMAN FOODS FOR CATS

This list will include food and drinks. Be aware that some items can be given sparingly, while others shouldn't be given at all. If you're unsure of what to do, it's best to skip all eight items entirely.

Chocolate

Just like with dogs, your kitty should NOT be given access to any type of chocolate. The main problem with chocolate is that it contains theobromine, which cats can't tolerate. The addition of caffeine makes chocolate an absolute no-no.

Fortunately, most cats won't get into chocolate because they don't have sweet receptors on their tongue. However, if your cat does happen to get into some sweet or bitter chocolate, you may have to take them to the closest emergency vet.

Dark or unsweetened chocolate is the worst for cats and can cause many issues, including heart problems, seizures, or muscle tremors. The sad news is that no one is really sure what exact amount could kill your feline friend. Instead, you have to take into consideration the amount they ate, how much they weigh, etc. And, if you have the chocolate's wrapper available, be sure to take it with you to the vet's office.

Sadly, there is no antidote to the effects of chocolate. Therefore, after an examination, your vet may induce vomiting. Another trick they may try is administering activated charcoal to absorb the toxins in your cat's upper intestines and stomach. It's also likely that they'll be put on a drip to ensure they remain hydrated.

Some of the signs that your cat has eaten chocolate may include:

- Diarrhea



- Vomiting
- High body temperature
- Abnormal heart rhythm
- Muscle tremors
- Increased thirst
- Abdominal discomfort
- Seizures

Although it's not an exact science, there is a chart that should help you decide if your cat has had too much chocolate.

Type of Chocolate	Min. Toxic Amount for an 8-lb Cat
Milk	1.14 oz.
Dark	0.5 oz.
Semi-Sweet	0.5 oz.

Alcohol

You've probably seen images of cats with a paw around some beer, right? Lots of people see the humor in this, but did you know that there is also a substantial risk to your cat's health?

Alcohol should never be ingested by a cat, regardless of your reasoning. All it takes is about a tablespoon of alcohol for your feline friend to end up in a huge mess. And the side effects aren't simple, either.

In fact, with just one tablespoon of alcohol, your cat can suffer from brain damage and severe liver damage. In other words, getting a funny photo simply isn't worth the risk.

Signs of alcohol exposure in cats include:

- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Tremors
- Disorientation
- Trouble breathing
- Coma
- Death

Cheese And Milk



This one might hurt a bit. After all, humans have become accustomed to offering their cats a bit of cheese and/or milk once in a while. Heck, milk and cheese are even in some of their canned cat food. This still doesn't mean it's good for them, though.

So, why can't cats have a saucer of milk for dinner like Tom from Tom and Jerry? Well, first off, there are some cats that would probably be completely fine if they drank a bowl of milk. However, the problem is that more than half of cats are lactose intolerant. Even if they're not lactose intolerant, they may still be sensitive to milk proteins. Additionally, it's possible that their body simply doesn't digest dairy very well.

I admit that I used to give little scraps of cheese to my cat. I'll also admit that, over time, this caused him to upchuck all over my hallway carpet. Not fun and definitely not worth it. Why take the risk of upsetting your cat's stomach when you could go the easier route, instead?

Tea, Coffee, Energy Drinks, etc.

Do you know what most teas have in common with coffee and energy drinks? Caffeine, that's what! And, as we already know, exposure to caffeine is not going to help your little furry buddy.

If your cat ingests some caffeine, they can develop issues such as heart palpitations, rapid breathing, and muscle tremors. Again, it's simply not worth the risk. And really, why was your cat anywhere near caffeine, anyway? If he or she likes to get into your drinks, then you need to watch your cat a lot more carefully whenever you have a beverage with caffeine in it.

Raw Meat, Raw Fish, Raw Eggs, And Fat Trimmings

Yes, your cat would eat raw meat if it was in the wild. But they go after specific types of animals, including birds and mice, that they can naturally digest (but that can still cause them to pick up parasites). Eating a mouse is quite different from eating raw meat from your kitchen.

So, what can eating raw foods and fat trimmings do to your cat? For starters, they'll most likely either vomit or get diarrhea. They also run the risk of developing pancreatitis, which is a painful experience. Additionally, they could end up getting E. coli or Salmonella. As with everything else on this list, this is a chance that you shouldn't take.

Garlic And Onions

If your cat is exposed to a tiny bit of garlic and/or onions, it's probably not going to be a big deal. However, if your cat eats a garlic clove, it's going to suffer from an upset stomach. Green onions will also especially upset your cat's stomach, although the entire onion family has the potential to cause problems.

Does your cat have any of the following symptoms? If so, take them to the vet immediately!

- Lethargy
- Weakness
- Reduced appetite
- Pale gums
- Orange to dark red urine

Raisins And Grapes

Grapes and raisins are known to cause acute kidney failure in dogs, but what about cats? Research says that although we don't know the level of toxicity yet, we do know that most cats have several issues with them. Even the smallest amount can make them ill, and it could lead to kidney failure for cats, too. Vomiting is likely to occur, as is hyperactivity. If you notice either symptom, it's best to get them some help. Other symptoms that can show up within 24 hours include:

- Lethargy
- Diarrhea
- Abdominal pain
- Reduced appetite
- Decreased urination

Xylitol



This particular food sweetener is known to cause a toxic reaction in dogs. While there is less evidence that cats have serious issues with xylitol, it has still been shown to cause their blood sugar levels to drop rapidly. This is known as hypoglycemia, and it can be very scary for your kitty to experience and you to witness.

Sadly, surviving exposure can still lead to liver failure. It can also cause your cat to have a seizure and/or go into a coma. Therefore, if your cat has any xylitol exposure, be sure to rush him or her to the vet.

HOW CAN I KEEP MY CAT SAFE?

Keeping a cat safe from bad foods doesn't have to be a major issue. Simply put your food away (in your

cupboards, if your cat likes to get into things) when you're done with it. Other tips for keeping your cat safe include:

- Anything you wouldn't eat shouldn't be given to your cat
- Only offer a human treat on the odd occasion to prevent nutritional imbalances and gastrointestinal upset
- If you wouldn't eat it raw, your cat shouldn't eat it raw

OTHER FOODS THAT CATS HAVE ISSUES WITH

Now that we've gotten the eight toxic foods out of the way, let's begin to explore some other foods that cats can't handle.

Raw Dough

Did you know that raw dough can create alcohol in a cat's stomach? This can have the same dangerous effects as if they actually drank alcohol. It's also possible for raw dough to expand inside their stomach, which causes lots of pain.

Raw Bones

Don't give your kitten raw bones to gnaw on. Bones can cause several issues such as choking, damaging their teeth, or injuring their digestive tract.

Dog Food

Your cat isn't going to have any toxicity issues from getting into your puppy's food, but it's not going to do them any favors, either. This is due to the fact that cats and dogs have very different nutritional needs.

A cat that eats a lot of dog food should be monitored. You see, dog food offers lower levels of vitamin A, taurine, arachidonic acid, and protein than a cat needs. Also, without sufficient taurine in their diet, they can develop dental and vision issues, along with heart disease.

Liver

Whether you overfeed liver or liver treats, it could lead to a vitamin A deficiency. This is a very serious condition that could affect your feline friend's

bones. If they have a toxic amount, it could make their bones become deformed. Additionally, they may suffer from osteoporosis and/or painful bone growths on their spine and elbows.

Canned Tuna

Sure, most cats absolutely LOVE tuna. But if you provide your cat with a diet that's mostly made up of canned tuna (NOT cat food in a can, but actual canned tuna), they're going to begin to feel malnourished. This happens because canned cat food has nutrients added to it, but canned tuna does not. Another issue that could happen to your kitten is mercury poisoning.

Uncooked Tomatoes And Potatoes

Eating any uncooked tomato or potato can lead to gastrointestinal distress, but they aren't toxic. However, there is one exception—green potatoes should never be given to a cat, regardless of whether they're cooked or raw. Symptoms can include:

- Cardiac issues
- Hallucinations
- Paralysis

HOLIDAY FOODS THAT YOUR CAT MAY HAVE AN ISSUE WITH



The holidays are the hardest time to keep your cat away from potentially harmful foods. Remain vigilant, and be sure to mention to guests that they should NOT give your pet a treat off their plate.

Eggnog

Cooked eggs may be okay for a cat, but the heavy sugar and cream content of eggnog makes it a bad

risk. If your cat gets into some eggnog, he or she will run the risk of developing pancreatitis.

Peppermint

Cats might be attracted to peppermint, but they really shouldn't be. This is due to the fact that most peppermint candies contain xylitol. Even worse, they could accidentally ingest a wrapper, which can cause an intestinal blockage.

Mashed Potatoes

Mashed potatoes are only safe if your cat is given a smidgen, and if the mashed potatoes are unsalted, unseasoned, and unbuttered. Otherwise, steer clear of this food.

Gingerbread

Is your cat attracted to cinnamon and/or nutmeg? Then you've GOT to prevent them from getting at your gingerbread cookies and/or house. Both of these ingredients can end up being toxic for kitties, so don't let them have any.

My humongous black cat, Riley, really likes the scent of nutmeg. I found this out the hard way when I woke up to find my Timbits had been messed with. He actually took a bite out of each Timbit! Fortunately, his bites were extremely small, so he didn't have much trouble. But can you imagine if he'd decided to go to town on one of the donuts?

Macadamia Nuts

This is yet another high-fat holiday treat that should NOT be shared with your feline friend. It is unknown exactly what causes cats to have issues, but they can experience the following symptoms:

- Vomiting
- Weakness
- Lethargy
- Tremors

Take your cat to the vet immediately if they've ingested macadamia nuts!

WHAT CAN I FEED TO MY CAT?

Aside from cat food, there may be moments when you want to give your kitten a special treat. The following foods are generally considered to be safe for healthy cats. But as with anything else, your cat's reaction may vary. Therefore, only offer a tiny amount until you know how your cat will react. It's also important that you don't allow them to get more than 10% of their calories from treats. If your cat displays signs of an upset stomach after they eat something on this list, then cross it off and don't feed it to them again.

Bananas

As long as you remove the peel, most cats won't have any issues digesting a banana.

Apples

The flesh of an apple is safe for your cat to eat. However, you must ensure that they **DON'T** eat any seeds, stems, or leaves.

Strawberries

Be sure to thoroughly wash strawberries before offering them to your kitty. Also, remove any stems that remain.

Blueberries

Just like with strawberries, be sure to wash them really well and remove any stems.

Watermelon

As long as you remove the rind and seeds first, watermelon can make a tasty treat for your frisky friend.

Cooked Eggs

Raw eggs are definitely on the 'do not feed' list, but you can safely provide your kitten with cooked eggs.

Peanut Butter

You'd better believe that peanut butter isn't just for humans and dogs! Most cats go wild for peanut butter. Before you give them some, though, be sure

to check the ingredients list. If your jar of peanut butter contains xylitol, do **NOT** feed it to your cat.

Baked Bread

Pay attention because this one might be a bit tricky. As long as you have baked bread—not bread dough—your kitty might love it. Just make sure that you only give them plain bread. Stay far away from breads that include chocolate, garlic, and raisins.

On a side note, every cat I've ever had has absolutely **LOVED** bread. Two of them even tried to steal pizza crust, and I'm not talking about only one time. I'm talking about **EVERY** time I ate pizza. It kept me on my toes, that's for sure!

FINAL THOUGHTS

Keeping your cat safe in a house that could contain multiple toxins takes some effort, but it's definitely worth it. Even if your kitty happens to stay away from all the food listed in this article, there are still things to worry about. For example, what type of plants are in your home? Many of them are toxic, as well.

To sum things up, there are certain symptoms you should be looking for at all times. These include:

- Confusion
- Breathing problems
- Depression
- Coughing
- Dilated pupils
- Diarrhea
- Upset stomach
- Drinking and urinating more than usual
- Shivering
- Seizures
- Tremors
- Skin irritation
- Weakness
- Vomiting

If your cat exhibits any of these symptoms, be sure to reach out to their vet immediately. Don't wait—time lost could be what causes you to lose your beloved pet.



MYTH BUSTER: CAN YOU REALLY TRAIN A CAT TO WALK ON A LEASH?



If you check the internet, you're going to find a LOT of opinions about cats and leash walking. Some have gone so far as to say that it's "cruel" to teach them to walk on a leash, but nothing could be further from the truth.

When it's time to teach a puppy to go on walks, humans tend to be understanding—at least to a point. But those same people would put a leash on a cat and then declare it a disaster if the cat doesn't take to it immediately. The truth, however, is that both puppies and kittens have no idea how to leash walk until they've been taught, so it's up to you to train them. Let's find out how!

STEP 1: CHOOSE A PROPER HARNESS FOR LEASH TRAINING

You probably think you're just going to hook your leash to your cat's collar and be good to go. I mean, that's how it happens with dogs, so it must be the same for kitties, right? **WRONG.**

This is the first major mistake that many feline owners make. But if you think about their collar, you're going to see why this isn't the best place to clip your leash. Cat collars are supposed to feature breakaway materials, which means that your cat can slip its collar pretty easily. And what's the point of taking your cat outside, just to see him or her immediately slip their collar and go running?

That's why it's really best to choose a well-fitted harness. Cats are different from dogs, and they need a different level of protection when they go for a leash walk. It's in their best interests to only wear a harness that has been specifically made for a cat (again, their body is different, so please **DON'T** rely on a puppy harness).

To make sure you select a solid harness, you'll need to try it on your cat. Do this **INSIDE ONLY**. Next, check to ensure that it fits properly. You can do this by using the two finger test. Take two of your fingers and try to slide them between the harness and your kitten. If they fit more or less perfectly, then you've got it! However, if you can stick more than two fingers under their harness—or if you can't even fit two—it's going to be a problem.

Once you've found an appropriately sized harness, it's time to move on to comfort. A well-fitted cat harness should not only pass the two finger test, but it should also be made out of soft materials. You'll want to verify that the harness is cut in a way that makes it easy for a cat to walk. Lightweight harnesses are best, and be sure that there is a D-ring attached to the back of it, as this is where you'll hook their leash.

STEP 2: SELECT A LEASH FOR YOUR CAT

Ideally, you'll want to pick out a leash that provides 4' to 6' feet for your kitty to roam. This is the

perfect length when a cat is just starting out, as it won't let them go too far, but it will give them a taste of independence. Later on, if your cat takes to leash walking, you can purchase a longer leash to expand their reach.

STEP 3: GET YOUR CAT USED TO THEIR HARNESS



It's time to let your cat get used to being around—and wearing—a harness. To begin, introduce your kitty to the harness without putting it on them. Allow them to sniff it and get used to its presence. Be sure to give them a few treats, too.

Once your cat is used to the idea of the harness, it's time to put it on them. This stage may be very easy or it may be extremely difficult, depending on the cat, so please show some patience. Either way, don't let them keep the harness on for more than a few minutes the first time, especially if he or she is scared of it. And, again, provide treats and effusive praise!

Next, begin to keep the harness on your cat for longer periods of time. Observe how they get around in it. Are they walking in a normal way? Can they stand to have the harness on for a full hour? Eventually work your way up to the hour point.

If they can get through these training steps without throwing a fit, you're probably going to be golden.

STEP 4: LET YOUR CAT GET USED TO THEIR LEASH

If you've reached a point where your cat has no fear of their harness, then it's time to move on to getting them used to their leash. Hook their leash on the D-ring, and then observe them. Some felines will take to it immediately and will begin to drag their leash behind them as they explore your house.

Others will become frightened by the leash dragging behind them.

If you happen to know that your cat will get frightened by having their leash drag behind them, don't do this step. Instead, hold the leash lightly as they move around. Don't give them any resistance.

No matter what you had to do to get them used to it, the good news is that if they can walk around inside your house with a leash on and not exhibit any issues, then they're going to be able to walk outside, too.

STEP 5: IT'S TIME TO TEACH YOUR CAT TO WALK ON A LEASH!

Every cat is different. It may take only one day to take your cat outside, or it could take weeks. And, let's not forget those stubborn cats who will never, ever achieve step 5. If this is what you're dealing with, although it's fine to keep trying for a bit longer, you should probably give up if they're absolutely against the idea. Some felines quite simply will NOT allow themselves to be taken for a walk.

Assuming that yours will learn to walk with it, though, put their harness and leash on, hold on to the leash, then open your front door. As your cat begins to feel like a kitten again, it can be confusing for them. Therefore, don't go too far the first time. Don't leave your front or backyard. Keep giving them treats and praise whenever they do something right.

Do NOT pull on their leash to redirect them. Instead, you can give them a slight, gentle tug. As long as they move in the direction you want, give them more treats and praise. Let them become used to all the sights, sounds, and smells of the outside world. Again, they might take to this like a fish to water, or they might take several weeks to get fully used to being outside. However they respond, you need to accept it and allow them to do what comes naturally.

STEP 6: PROTECT YOUR CAT'S SAFETY

So, you've decided to take your feline friend on walks, but have you changed anything else that pertains to them? You might want to think again before you end up letting your cat pick up a disease or get injured by a dog.



Any human who takes their cat outside is also taking on the risk of them contracting heartworms, ticks, fleas, and other parasites. This means that you **MUST** speak to your veterinarian to get them on preventative medicine for these things. Many of you may already provide preventative medication, but for the most part, if a cat stays inside, it's not going to get these illnesses. So, people who have previously had an indoor-only cat will need to begin protecting their cat by getting them the proper shots to go outside.

Something else you need to be worried about are angry dogs. Barking alone is more than enough to scare some kitties, and if they're angry on top of it, you could be in trouble. When it comes to things like dogs, traffic, loud intersections, etc., you have to keep your cat away from them. Or, to put it another way, if you know that there is a particularly surly dog on the next block, don't walk there.

If you happen to have a bad encounter anyway, your cat may not want to return to the outside. At least for a while, anyway. There is nothing wrong with this, and you should pay attention to what your cat is feeling.

REMEMBER: Cats have complex emotions, just like humans. They can definitely feel fear, and they also can have difficulty with anxiety, stress, depression, etc. Therefore, be certain they feel safe when you take a walk. The last thing you want to do is turn what's supposed to be a fun bonding activity into something that your cat fears.

YOUR CAT WILL WALK YOU, AND THAT'S NORMAL

When people walk dogs, they take great pride in correcting their pet any time he or she begins to walk them. With cats, though, it's a completely different ball game. Of the felines that take to leash walking, 99.9% of them will not take their walking cues from you. Instead, they will investigate anything that catches their interest. They may also decide it's time to sit or lie down for 5–10 minutes, and there is little to nothing you can do about it.

When your kitty decides to take unscheduled breaks, be patient with them. They did not go outside with you just to take a brisk walk, like your pup would do. No, for a cat, going outside is entirely about sensory experiences. Some they'll seek out, and others they'll run away from.

WHY SHOULD YOU TEACH YOUR CAT TO LEASH WALK?

This question doesn't come up as often as it should. I mean, if you're going to teach your cat to walk on a leash, you've got to have a reason, right? Surprisingly, it seems to happen most often on a whim, which is why so many people have cats that refuse to walk on a leash.

Leash training, when done correctly, can provide fantastic benefits for a cat's physical health. Rather than slinking around your house, they'll be able to truly stretch their legs outside. Once they reach adulthood, they begin to be less active. Therefore, take them outside and reintroduce them to the excitement of getting some exercise.

Another great benefit comes in the form of better mental health. You see, cats are naturally curious, and they want to explore the world around them. But when they're cooped up in a house or apartment, they have much less land to roam. Even if you provide lots of toys and attention, it's still possible for them to get bored.

When you teach them to walk on a leash, you've just expanded their world. And, once they have time to get used to it, you'll also see their confidence begin to go up. Where once they hid, they'll become more likely to deal with a variety of different settings, along with other cats, dogs,

people, noises, etc. For this reason alone, it can be a good idea to leash train them.

ARE YOU SURE MY CAT CAN WALK ON A LEASH?



We've already mentioned how some cats just won't take to a leash. But did you know that this is usually caused more by you than by them? That's right; if you had enough will for them to walk on a leash, the odds are extremely high that they would have learned.

The truth is that everyone wants their cat to take to walking immediately, but that's just not going to happen. Some kitties who eventually learned to leash walk took months and months to even get used to their harness, let alone walking. But if you have enough patience and are gentle enough, almost every cat can learn!

Things that may help them include:

- Being taught as a kitten
- Being confident
- Not getting scared easily by new things
- Trusting you
- Being food motivated

Since you know your feline's personality, you should be able to tell immediately whether your cat may have issues by looking at the list above. For example, if you have a cat that seems to be afraid of everything under the sun, it's going to take them a lot more time to learn how to leash walk.

Sometimes, the time and effort you have to put in doesn't quite seem worth it. There is also a chance that you'll fail to properly teach them, which is going to cause even more issues. But if you know

that you've got a confident, food motivated cat, then the process should be much simpler.

And if all else fails, hire a cat trainer! They have the necessary knowledge – and they're also not going to be as tentative with your cat as you may be. Another perk of using a trainer is that they have the ability to work with cats of any age. In fact, Steven Appelbaum, President of Animal Behavior College, says that the oldest cat he's taught was 16 years old!

Unless you have unimaginable patience, though, you're probably not going to be teaching a cat how to leash walk if he or she is more than a couple of years old. Just know that if you take them to a professional trainer, they can most likely still learn.

I GIVE UP, IT'S TOO HARD!

Choosing to give up on leash training your cat isn't the end of the world. Some cats are simply more equipped to leash walking, and your cat may not be one of them. However, there is a rather simple trick you can try before you give up altogether.

Before you even try to train them, set them outside in a cat playpen or wire dog crate. This will give them an opportunity to experience the outside world from a close-up perspective, but it will not allow them to go roaming. Doing this first may let you know whether your cat will be a good candidate to walk on a leash. Did they love the experience and not want to come back in? Or were they frightened by their time outside? The answer to this question should help you decide if your cat even wants to go outside.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Be patient and gentle with your feline buddy, and he or she may soon begin to explore the world with your help. Having you by their side to watch over them and take care of them will make them feel more confident, too. Just remember to take it slow, and don't skip any of the training steps shared in this article.

It might be a long, drawn out process, but once your cat begins to get more physical exercise and gains an additional outlet for their mental health, you're going to see some positive changes. Plus, the bond between the two of you will never be stronger.

Does your cat have a never-ending case of the zoomies? Or is he or she much more laid back? Regardless, every cat gets a burst of energy at times, and it can be quite bothersome to their humans. In most cases, we'd suggest letting your cat tire itself out, but this doesn't always work. Therefore, we've assembled this guide to help you learn how to calm down the savage wild beast that your cat can become at times.

Calming Techniques: The Kitten Stage

No matter what your cat will become, they'll have A LOT of energy when they're a kitten. They'll also exhibit several behaviors that can be cute and annoying. This happens because kittens need to be able to learn and grow, and they do this primarily by exploring their surroundings.

As they grow, they'll also change their playing style. What begins as a hunt for your finger may turn into ambushing your feet. But remember, even when your kitten hurts you, this probably wasn't his or her intent. Instead, they were simply practicing how to hunt. It's not your cat's fault that your feet happen to be positioned near their head!

Your kitty needs to go through the following stages to have proper development.

- Social Learning – Two weeks
- Social Play – Peaks around 3 months
- Teenage Years – Four to nine months, may show hunting behaviors
- Adult Transition Stage – From 9 to 14 months, begins to adapt their behaviors to their owner
- Adult Stage – 15 months+

As your kitten begins to grow up, you may find that his or her level of play gets a bit out of hand at times. Therefore, to keep your kitten more calm, you can try the following.

Have A Regular Playtime

If there is one thing that cats prize above all else, it's routine. Use this to your advantage to create a regular playtime for your kitty. Whether you play for 10 minutes or 30 minutes (or if you break up your playtime into several smaller bursts), engaging

Calming Techniques For All Energy Levels

your kitten with playtime provides them with much more than just fun. Much like with humans, cat behaviorists have found that playing helps them build vital skills and should absolutely be encouraged.

Give Them Several Places To Play

You're going to want to give your kitten a lot of room for play. It's important to stimulate their natural senses, which means providing them with scratching posts, cat trees, windowsills, shelves to climb on, etc. If you have a long hallway with room for a cat tunnel, put it in!

The more outlets you give your cat, the less chance that he or she will spend their time trying to tear up your feet. On a side note, while they're a kitten is the perfect time to teach them to walk on a leash. So, if that's in your plans, get them started! Learning to leash walk is yet another thing that will help them grow up.

Create A Space Just For Your Kitten

Keeping a space set aside just for your kitten is a fantastic way to let them know when it's time to chill out. Put on some soothing music (Spotify and YouTube have tons of music that's been created expressly to calm kitties), give them access to food and water, and be sure that there are LOTS of toys for them to play with. This is the ideal place to put your kitten when you have to attend to something other than them.

Playtime For Kittens

Now that you've set a schedule for playtime, it's time to get down to it! Here are some important tips to keep you and your cat happy and safe.

1. Don't Use Your Hands And Feet

What seems cute for an adorable little kitten won't feel so cute once they get older. Therefore, do NOT train them to go after your hands and/or your feet. Instead, use a wand toy to redirect their attention. Alternatively, you could go with a hair tie or crumpled up receipt. Either way, the point is to NOT let them get used to swiping at your fingers and toes. This can save you a lot of energy and aggravation down the line.

2. Mimic Their Natural Hunting Instincts

If you can learn how to mimic their natural hunting instincts, you're going to end up with a satisfied and tired cat. So, what does this mean, exactly?

Imagine that your kitty is hunting for real. What type of prey will capture their attention? For the most part, they're going to be on the hunt for a wounded bird or a mouse. What you should do is build their anticipation by slowly moving/dragging the toy around. Then, move the toy around a corner, under a blanket, or make loud rustling sounds. Any of these activities will get your kitten up and running!

3. Offer Lots Of Different Toys

Your kitty is going to need to try out a bunch of different toys before he or she finds a favorite. You can try crinkle balls, a laser pointer, feathers, etc. And, if they lose interest in their favorite toy, merely put it away and pull out something different. You can always reintroduce them to their old favorite in a few weeks or months when, most likely, it'll become a new favorite again.

4. Have A Cool Down Period

Your fierce hunter has been attacking the wand toy for a while now, and you're getting bored with it. Rather than simply drop the toy and walk away, you need to let them know that they 'caught' something. Therefore, near the end of play, start to move their toy more slowly and allow them to catch it more

easily. This will signal to their brains that playtime is about to end.

Calming A Kitten

Kittens spend a lot of time asleep, but when they're awake, watch out! Using the techniques listed above will help you calm them down, while still letting them learn and grow.

Be aware that a cat has absolutely NO idea what you're talking about when you try to discipline them. They literally do not have the part of the brain that would allow them to anticipate getting into trouble. This is the major difference between dogs and cats, and it's why you need to treat a cat differently.

Calming Techniques: Hyperactivity



Feline hyperactivity comes in the form of exhibiting several nervous behaviors. Instead of taking their usual lap around the inside of your house, they may begin to jump wildly between furniture, running around the house like they're mad, compulsive licking, attracting attention for negative behavior such as hitting, and chasing humans and other pets.

Now, if you're thinking that everything aside from compulsive licking might not actually be a bad thing, this probably showcases the difference between occasional outbursts and true hyperactivity. For instance, my cat runs around the house and jumps off furniture like he's wild for about 10-15 minutes in the evening. This is something that we've both gotten used to, and I let him run it out. For the most part, he's hunting critters through the window, so running and jumping comes naturally.

However, if he were to start exhibiting these behaviors at other times of the day, it might become a problem. There are certain types and amounts of

behavior that are only an issue if they're repeated several times each day.

Let's talk about cat zoomies now because it's vital that you don't misunderstand their purpose. When a cat suddenly springs up and goes kind of wild for a couple of minutes, usually followed by sleeping, they're not doing anything wrong or unusual. Don't attempt to punish them for their behavior, as it would be akin to punishing you for breathing. This is NOT an example of true hyperactivity.

When Does Hyperactivity Become A Real Problem?

One of the reasons that cats become hyperactive is because they're stressed out or anxious. They could also have developed a disease or physical problem. If your cat is usually pretty laid back but then begins to exhibit hyperactivity, be sure to check them for signs of hair loss, weight loss, lack of appetite, etc. as these may be symptoms of a serious health issue.

Treating Hyperactivity

As long as your cat doesn't have any signs of a mental or physical illness, then they probably just need to be played with more often. Try each of the following to see what calming technique works for your cat.

Burn Energy

Look, if you've got a hyperactive cat, they might as well get something out of it, right? That's why you should dedicate yourself to playing with them for a few minutes each day. Instead of playing a normal, lower stakes game, however, try to really satisfy their instincts. This should help them burn out their excess energy.

Enrichment

The more time your cat spends alone in the house, the more enrichment items you'll need to buy for them. In other words, toys, toys, toys! Make sure that each toy you give them can work for self play, too.

Adopt A Friend

Some hyperactive cats will calm down if you bring another animal into the house. Beware, though: this

may work great, or it may leave you having to deal with two hyperactive cats.

Feline Pheromones

You can try spraying feline pheromones into the air. Smelling this particular scent tends to make cats relax.

Schedule Mealtimes

Did you know that hyper cats expend a big burst of energy when they get hungry? This might seem like the opposite reaction to what they should really have, but it is what it is. Scheduling their mealtimes allows you to take a modicum of control over their zoomies.

Hold Playtime Still

As you probably remember, scheduling their playtime can be quite helpful for kitties. Well, it turns out that doing the same thing can be beneficial for an adult, too. Even if your cat is getting older and appears to do little other than sleep, they've STILL got energy to burn. You can burn off their hyperactive energy by giving them at least 20 to 30 minutes of playtime. An example of playtime could be:

- **Toys they can hit** – Cats love to bat things across the floor, especially ping-pong balls.
- **Toys they can chase** – Laser pointers, wind-up toys, or a piece of string will fit the bill nicely.
- **Toys they can jump onto** – Cats want to be up high, so be sure to provide them with at least one place where they can do just that.
- **Toys they can scratch** – Your cat will naturally want to sharpen its claws. Give them plenty of scratching posts, or they will find something else to claw up.

Teach Your Cat To Walk On A Leash

Although it may take a while to get them used to it, walking on a leash will allow them to go outside. This is a fantastic way to burn off excess energy. Whether they spend your walk trotting ahead of you or simply start rolling in the grass, you will have added to their mental database of smells and sights. This will enhance their understanding and enjoyment of the world.

Check For Hyperthyroid Issues

Approximately 10% of senior cats have an overactive thyroid gland. If your cat has hyperthyroidism, they'll begin to exhibit a lack of sleep, reduced appetite, and heightened energy and stress levels. If you notice any signs of this condition, take them to the vet immediately for a checkup.

Speak Calmly To Your Cat

As all cat owners know, they are very intelligent creatures. Did you know that they actually develop some of their characteristics based on your character? That's why, for example, my cat changed a lot after I got divorced. Whereas he used to serve as a calming (but annoying) presence for my super anxious ex-spouse, he has now become his own cat and seems to be much happier.

If you speak to your cat in a calm, nice voice, and don't attempt to pick them up all the time, your cat will respect you. This may also come through in the many ways that they express their emotions.

- **High, vertical tail** – Happy, confident, and comfortable
- **Low tail** – Fearful or anxious
- **Forward ears** – Relaxed, engaged, confident, or alert
- **Turned back ears** – Angry or fearful

Give Them Some Space

The source of their hyperness may be anxiety and/or insecurities. When they're feeling this way, the last thing you want to do is yell at them. After all, they're already feeling more sensitive than usual. Therefore, if you try to calm them by stretching out your hand to pet them, it might just get smacked! Instead, your best bet is to monitor them from a bit of a distance until they've calmed back down.

Curb Hyperactivity By Not Giving In To It

This tip is very, very important. Never give in to a cat that is pestering you constantly. If you give in even one time, it may change your cat's behavior

doing. Your cat will eventually settle down and move on.

Things To Keep In Mind

When your cat begins to play at a hyperactive level, ask yourself:

- Do they have physical pain?
- Can you play with them before bedtime to tire them out?
- Has your cat had enough to eat?
- Are there enough enrichment toys?

All of these are relatively easy to look into and are quite normal. Signs of a real issue include:

- If your cat's tail twitches, be careful. He or she is becoming unhappy. Stress will soon follow unless you can stop the behavior.
- If your cat is stressed out, it'll find some relief by urinating outside the litter box.
- If your cat is feeling unsafe or insecure, it's likely to hide.

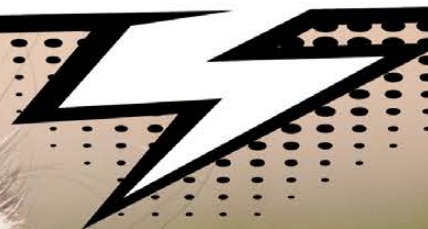
To address point number 2, my cat used to urinate in the bathtub and, occasionally, on the bathroom floor. All such behaviors completely ceased to exist as soon as my ex-spouse moved out. So, if you've got a cat that's urinating outside their box, be sure to take a look at the behaviors of everyone in your house. Even if it isn't intended, a human who is really stressed out can easily stress out your kitty.

Final Thoughts

There are so many factors that can make a normal cat turn into a hyperactive bundle of way too much joy. Whether they're hurt, anxious, or simply enjoy being a terror, finding out what is behind their behavior is in your best interests.

Also, don't give up! They became hyperactive for a reason, and you can choose to settle them down. Simply begin to work your way down this list of calming techniques.

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