

FIFI FUREVER



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TOXIC PLANTS FOR CATS

Cat Grooming 101: Why Fifi Needs Your Help

Can You Really Get Toxoplasmosis From Your Kitty?

Everything You Need To Know About Urinary Tract Infections

Next Issue: Secrets to Socializing Your Cat



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Can You Really Get Toxoplasmosis From Your Kitty?

As a cat owner, you've undoubtedly heard a lot of buzz around the word toxoplasmosis. But what exactly does it mean and do you REALLY run a big risk of contracting it? In this article, we'll examine the facts and evidence surrounding toxoplasmosis, along with how common it truly is.

Next Issue: Secrets to Socializing Your Cat



Cat Grooming 101:

Why Fifi Needs Your Help

As you've undoubtedly observed, cats tend to be quite fastidious about keeping themselves clean. In fact, cats groom themselves for approximately 30% to 50% of their day, which comes out to about 2-1/2 hours.

With all of the care and time they put into it, they probably don't need any help, right? Well, that's a common misconception—it's simply not true. You see, despite spending so much time grooming, a cat's tongue will generally not make it past his or her topcoat.

A cat will self-groom with the intention of achieving two things:

- Getting rid of any scents that may tip off an enemy that a cat is near.
- Distributing natural oils that keep their fur shiny and clean.

For everything else, cats have to rely on a human's help. This is the primary reason why feral cats typically have some displaced fur, regardless of how often they groom.

How Often Should I Brush My Cat?

2 The answer to the question of how often you should brush your cat will depend on a few factors.

First, what length of fur does your kitty have? Second, how good of a job do they do on their own? Finally, what role does brushing play in their life? As in, does it simply keep their fur looking nice, or is it also a good way to bond?

The recommended amount of time you spend brushing your cat is daily if he's medium-haired or long-haired. If he's short-haired, however, you can probably get away with doing it once or twice per week. Either way, though, perhaps the most important part is what type of brush you use (more on this point later).

How Do I Brush My Cat's Fur?

Before you begin grooming your cat, it's important to take a moment to check out the condition of her fur. You want to see fur with a natural gloss to it. It should also bounce back right underneath your hand as you pet her. These are indicators that everything is okay.

If, however, you find any signs of ticks or fleas, unusual bumps, wounds, and/or bald patches, you'll need to take further action. Your absolute best course of action is to take her to the vet for a full checkup.

You should also run your hands along her body when grooming your feline friend. This is the best way to notice issues like bumps, wounds, or fleas. Be sure to keep an eye out for black specks of dried blood. Next, sneak a peek under her tail to see if she needs help removing any feces. And, while you're there, check her anus for any rice-sized, tan objects. If you see any, it's likely she has a tapeworm.

Want to know why you should regularly brush your cat's fur? Because if you don't, you'll probably see an increase in hairballs. Additionally, she could suffer from painful tangles. If you find a mat in her fur, your best bet is to use a mat-splitter or to carefully cut it out. Make sure you also increase the amount of time you spend grooming her, so that this doesn't happen again.

Short-Haired Cats

Short-haired cats have fur that grows only up to about two inches long. This makes them super easy to groom as they typically just need a quick brushing.

Begin by working the brush through your cat's fur. Begin at his head and brush toward his tail. Doing this will remove debris and general dirt. Make sure you brush his entire body, including the abdomen and chest. Be sure to concentrate on a single section at a time, taking special care to remove any tangles and dead hair.

Examples of short-haired cats include:

- Bengal
- American Shorthair
- Russian Blue

Long-Haired Cats

If your cat's fur grows between two and five inches, they're a long-haired cat. She has long, beautiful hair, but it's super easy for it to become tangled and matted unless you take proper care of it.

Examples of a long-haired cat include:

- Maine Coon
- Persian
- Siberian



Start brushing your long-haired cat on her abdomen and legs. Gently comb her fur upward, toward her head. Next, comb her neck hair upward as well, toward her chin. Once this is done, move on to her tail. Make a part in the middle of her tail, then brush out the fur toward its respective side. If you discover any mats or knots, you can try sprinkling talcum powder on them and then working them apart with your hands. If this doesn't work, try a mat-splitter. If all else fails, remove the mat by carefully cutting it out.

Curly-Haired Cats

Curly-haired cats work great for people who don't want to deal with a lot of hair. This cat type rarely sheds, which means they have less of a need for daily brushing. Once a week will suit these cats due to a genetic mutation that gives them curly hair.

Examples of a curly-haired cat include:

- Cornish Rex
- Devon Rex
- Selkirk Rex

Hairless Cats

Is your hairless cat actually bald? The answer, of course, is no. Instead, they have a very fine coat that resembles suede. Taking care of a hairless cat



requires you to either live in a warm environment or to provide your kitty with a lot of cat sweaters.

Something that every cat owner needs to be aware of is that hairless cats require a weekly bath. This is pretty much the only way to prevent their bodies from accumulating a build-up of oil.

Various Layers Of Cat Fur

Knowing about your cat's fur can make it easier to pick the appropriate brush for them. Please be aware that not every cat breed has all of the following.

Down Fur

This soft and silky undercoat insulates your cat against heat loss. Interestingly, some cats, such as Sphynx and Javanese, do not have down fur. On the other hand, some cats only have a down fur, especially if they're curly-haired.

Awn Fur

Awn fur is coarser than down fur. Although it's a cat's secondary layer of fur, most of what you can see is actually awn fur. Its purpose is to keep your cat insulated and to protect their down fur.

Guard Fur

Most commonly known for determining your cat's color, their guard fur also helps propel water away from their body. Guard fur also makes up their outer coat.

Vibrissae Fur

These thick hairs—referred to as whiskers—help orient a cat that's wandering through the dark and also helps a cat determine if they're small enough to enter an opening.

Benefits Of Grooming

Regardless of whether he grooms himself or is enjoying a brushing from you, your cat gets several benefits from the grooming process, including:

- Improved circulation.
- Improved muscle tone.
- Their fur is smoothed down, which helps with insulation.



- The glands at the base of their coat become stimulated, which helps waterproof their fur.
- Spreading their saliva helps keep them cool in the summertime.
- Sebum is spread evenly, which helps protect their skin and coat, as well as helping to waterproof their fur.

Plus, there is one added benefit when you're brushing them—it lets the two of you bond! After all, once you've selected a brush that they love, they'll absolutely love it when you brush them.

How To Introduce Grooming

Your cat knows all about grooming, but what about when you do it for her? Introducing the brush at a young age is the best way to get your cat used to being brushed. That way, it won't seem weird anymore once they start to get older and stiffer. Another nice thing about grooming them from kittenhood is that it will build a stronger bond between the two of you because of all the physical contact.

Please be aware that matting can be extremely painful for your feline friend. So, regardless of the way they act at the moment, they'll appreciate it if you break up or remove the mats in their fur.

If it's difficult to groom your cat in the beginning, you can offer them treats, soothing words, and gentle strokes. Once your cat becomes calmed and distracted with their treats, gently begin grooming her again. This may take several sessions, but she will eventually accept your grooming—as long as you've purchased the right brush!

What Type Of Brush Works Best?

You'll find a lot of different advice on this topic. For instance, some sources will claim that all short-haired cats need a wire brush. However, what if your cat refuses to let you use a wire brush on him? The most important attribute of any brush is for your cat to like it.

Fortunately, there are six main types of cat brushes to choose from. You can use any of them on your cat, and this will provide you with an improvement over not brushing her at all. Be aware that some cats simply don't take to cat brushes at all, but they might like a small human brush. I found out this was my cat's choice after he snubbed all the expensive cat brushes I'd bought and found himself an old, small human brush that he absolutely loves.

Most cats will like a cat brush, though, and here are the six categories.

Slicker Brush



like a dream!

The close together metal teeth can remove dead or loose hair from their topcoat. At the same time, it can also penetrate deep, which allows it to work out most matts, knots, and tangles. Additionally, this brush is a champ at distributing your cat's natural oils, and this will keep their fur nice and shiny.

CAUTION: The metal teeth can be sharp. So, again, make sure you use this brush carefully. Also, never use this brush on their face.

Pin Brush

Do you have a medium or long-haired cat? A pin brush might be the perfect solution! This option also tends to work well with wooly or curly coats because the pins are able to penetrate deeply, which allows you to prevent matting and remove tangles and knots.

One really nice touch when you decide to use a pin brush is that the pins each have a protective ball on the end. In other words, you're not going to hurt your feline friend if you accidentally brush too hard. Another nice touch is that the protective balls do a fantastic job of stimulating their natural oils. Your cat should have a really nice shine to his coat if you use this type of brush.



Bristle Brush

This is a nice, general-purpose brush. For a short-haired cat, it'll be all you need. With a long-haired cat, though, it'll serve as the finishing touch. You can find these in several different sizes, along with several different brush types.



- Short-Haired Cats – choose tightly packed bristles.
- Long-Haired Cats – choose bristles that are more spaced out.

The soft bristles in a bristle brush are able to put most cats at ease, even if they're typically averse to you grooming them. As an added bonus, this brush offers a nice massaging effect while you're using it. Still, you might need to experiment with a few different bristle brushes to find one your cat truly takes to.

Double-Sided Brush

This double-sided brush is a fantastic choice for cats with longer hair because it gives them the best of both worlds! Rather than having to purchase multiple brushes, it also keeps things nice and simple (and cheaper!).



Always start with the pin side first. It'll serve as a fantastic detangler and can remove big clumps of loose or dead fur. Once you're done, flip it over to the bristle side to remove any excess hair. You'll also see how shiny your feline friend's fur becomes after you've run the bristle side through her fur a few times.

Grooming Glove



A grooming glove can be ideal if your kitty doesn't like to be brushed. Simply slip one on your hand and pet them like you normally do. There are two different types of grooming brushes: silicone bristles or soft rubber bristles. These two types of bristles will feel different on your cat's body, so choose according to the type they seem to like best.

One of the best things about using a grooming glove is that once you're done petting them, the hair is easy to remove. Go to a trash can and peel back the layer of hair, then dispose of it. Easy peasy!

This grooming glove will work wonders on a short-haired cat. It can also reduce shedding in long-haired cats.

Silicone Or Rubber Brush



Has your cat had issues adjusting to getting brushed? Perhaps they've never been brushed before or they just flat-out don't like any other options? Try using a silicone or rubber brush! Because of the way they're made, these brushes can offer a lot of support in terms of making your cat feel more relaxed and comfortable.

One of the best things about using a silicone or rubber brush is that they're fantastic for sensitive skin. They'll also remove a ton of loose hair from any and all cat breeds. However, don't use one of these brushes to remove any tangles or knots.

Almost all cats absolutely love the feel of a silicone or rubber brush, too (aside from my super picky boy, anyway). When you're brushing them, they'll feel a gentle massaging effect. It'll also make them have a healthy coat by promoting blood flow.

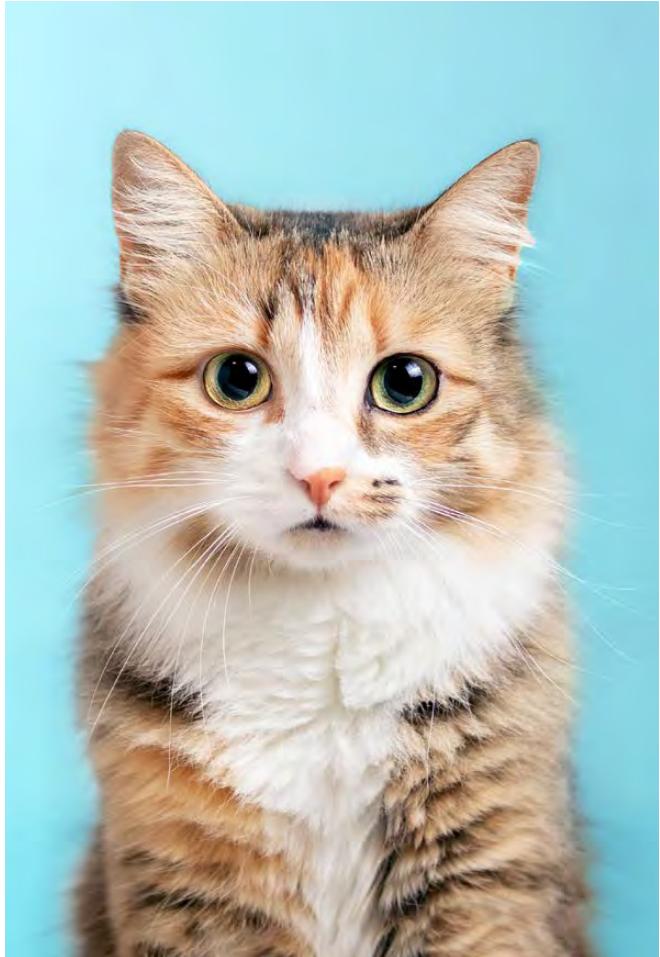
Do you like to rub your cat in circles? This is pretty much the only brush that you can do this with without causing discomfort. You can also run the brush along their back from their neck to their tail, of course.

Final Thoughts

In the past, most cat owners had no idea what their cat's emotional and physical needs were, aside from being fed and watered, anyway. Interestingly, as awareness of our cats' needs has grown, so has their life expectancy. Back in the 1980s, the average lifespan for a feline was only seven years. Today, their average lifespan is 15 years!

What this shows is that cats absolutely do need your help to live their best lives. Therefore, begin grooming them at the youngest age possible. Not only will this get them used to it, but it'll also start giving them the many benefits of being groomed while they're still quite young.

REMEMBER: Some cats are naturally resistant to grooming techniques, so you may have to try out several different brushes. Don't give up, though, because there are many, many wonderful things you can both get out of a grooming session, not the least of which is strengthening your bond forever.



When your cat gets a urinary tract infection, it's important for you to realize that it's a medical emergency. Failure to take your feline friend to the vet could cause their urethra to be partially or completely blocked. In turn, their bladder could rupture, or they could end up with kidney failure. Even worse, your kitty's risk of death becomes quite high.

Fortunately, there are several steps you can take between them contracting a UTI and them passing away that will clear everything up. For example, I had a cat named Kali who developed a UTI. She had to go through surgery and eat special food for the rest of her life, but she lived for another 12 years. This guide will teach you how to ensure your cat lives a long and healthy life!

Symptoms Of A UTI

Recognizing UTI symptoms is, fortunately, relatively easy. As long as you clean your cat's litter box daily, you should catch on to the fact that a problem is developing. Symptoms may include:

- Frequently urinating without much coming out
- Blood in their urine
- Peeing outside of their box, oftentimes right next to it
- Crying in pain while urinating
- Straining to urinate
- Increased focus on licking their urinary opening

If you notice any of these symptoms, contact your vet right away. It's critical to get your buddy immediate care, so be sure to call around if your vet is unable to see you within 24 hours. Getting them treated is much more important than sticking with your regular vet.

This Is An Issue In Older Cats, Yes?

Despite what some may believe, UTIs can affect any cat, at any age. In fact, some kitties are simply prone to getting UTIs. Additionally, some cats may get simple UTIs that clear up with antibiotics, while others may develop bladder stones and/or blockages that will require surgical intervention.

Is It Worse In Male Cats?

Again, any cat of any age can develop a UTI.



Everything You Need To Know About Urinary Tract Infections

Because of their physiology, however, male cats are at a greater risk of needing surgery. If you have a male cat that presents with symptoms of a UTI, take him to the vet IMMEDIATELY.

With your female cat, you have more wiggle room to see if you can help her clear it up naturally. Even then, you should NEVER wait for more than a day or two to take her to a vet if she's still having problems.

Is It Definitely A UTI?

When your cat exhibits the above symptoms, they definitely have something wrong with their lower urinary tract. While it might not be an actual UTI, it is still quite serious. There are five different reasons your feline friend may be experiencing lower urinary tract difficulties.

Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)

When a cat has a bacterial infection in their urethra or bladder, it can easily lead to a UTI. Your vet will need a urine sample to be able to conclusively determine what they're suffering from, though.

Urethral Obstruction

In some cases, your kitty's urethra may become completely blocked. This can happen due to a buildup of tissues and minerals that's referred to as



a urethral plug. If your cat isn't passing urine at all, this is a prime indicator of a urethral obstruction. It also indicates that they're in a medical emergency and need to see a vet IMMEDIATELY.

Urinary Stones (Uroliths)

Your cat naturally needs to urinate, yet the minerals in their pee can clump and turn into tiny crystals in their bladder. It's even possible for large stones to develop in their bladder. When this happens, your cat will experience pain while urinating and bloody urine.

This is what happened – in part – to my cat, Kali. As with every cat with a similar problem, her vet did an X-ray and a urine test to figure out what was wrong. I took Kali to the vet on the second day that she presented with problems, and it was a good thing I did – her vet told me that she wouldn't have lived for more than 24 more hours or so without surgical intervention.

Let this serve as a reminder: even though I had a female cat, she still wouldn't have survived for more than 72 hours without the vet's help. So, again, **ALWAYS** take your cat to the vet right away if you think they have a urinary issue.

Feline Idiopathic Cystitis

What does it mean when your beloved cat has urinary tract irritation without also having any stones or an infection? This is called feline idiopathic cystitis, and it can be caused by a change in their diet or by stress. The good news is that you can treat either issue fairly easily.

Miscellaneous Causes

There are several other reasons that your cat can suffer from urinary tract complications. For instance, if they have a thyroid issue or diabetes, it

could be to blame. Also, although rare, it's possible that your kitty has a tumor in his or her urinary tract. The only way to know for sure is to take them to the vet for urine and blood tests.

Why Is My Male Cat At A Heightened Risk For A UTI?

We already know that male cats are at a heightened risk due to their physiology, but what is the exact reason? Well, male cats have thinner and longer urethras than female cats. Due to the shape and size of their urethra, it can become blocked more easily than a female's. Therefore, be sure to pay even closer attention to your male cat's litter box routine.

Treating A UTI With Antibiotics

If your vet prescribes antibiotics for your kitty, you've likely dodged a bullet. Make sure your cat finishes their round of antibiotics, though, or you'll be back at the vet before you know it.

Clearing Up A Urethra Obstruction

Once again, if they have a urethra obstruction, they're in a medical emergency. Do NOT wait to get them help. Even with immediate veterinary assistance, some cats will not survive an obstruction.

Your vet will insert a tube into their urinary opening. From there, they will flush the area repeatedly with a sterile fluid until the obstruction is cleared.

Special Diet

In some cases, your vet may suggest switching your cat to a special diet. They will have to deal with the stones that have developed, but once your cat gets on the special diet, it will dissolve future instances of stones before they can become an issue.

What Does A Urinalysis Look Like?

The first thing your vet will do is perform a urinalysis. This can tell them a lot about your cat's condition, including:

- pH level
- Urine specific gravity (how well your cat concentrates their urine)
- Glucose (sugar in their blood may indicate diabetes)

- Ketones (can often be seen in body-wasting or diabetes)
- Blood
- Protein
- Bilirubin (breakdown product of blood)

After these have all been considered, your vet will place the urine specimen inside a centrifuge. This allows debris and cells to gather at the bottom of the tube. Then, the debris will be evaluated, which reveals the presence of white blood cells, red blood cells, crystals, and bacteria.

In other words, a urinalysis is the perfect place to start when a cat presents with UTI symptoms. If your vet wants to do a urinalysis on your cat, be sure you say yes.

What Is A Culture And Sensitivity Test?

The simple fact is that although your vet may know—or strongly suspect—that a UTI is responsible, they still won't know what specific bacteria is causing the UTI without a culture and sensitivity test.

Often, your vet will prescribe a commonly given UTI antibiotic in the hopes it will provide some relief. Meanwhile, a lab will receive your cat's sample and begin testing it. This process allows your vet to give a definitive answer to what's going on and will let them know which antibiotic will work best.

After your cat finishes his or her round of antibiotics, it's critically important to run another urinalysis. This will either prove that your cat is doing better or show there's still an issue. In the latter case, your vet will need to do more searching to discover if there's another issue present that is causing UTIs.

What Cat Breeds Are Most At Risk?

Certain cat breeds are more predisposed to developing bladder stones. These include:

- Himalayans
- Persians
- Siamese

If you have one of these breeds, pay extra attention if anything about their litter box routine seems off.

How Much Does A UTI Cost To Treat?

If you're a responsible pet owner, you're most likely concerned about how much a UTI will cost you. Well, the cost of your vet visit, antibiotics, and lab tests alone will most likely set you back \$150–\$200. Please note that this price can vary some, depending on where you live.

If your cat needs surgical intervention, however, the cost will dramatically spike upward. It may end up costing you thousands of dollars to ensure your feline friend gets better.

Can My Cat Fight Off A UTI On His Or Her Own?

In the majority of cases, your cat CANNOT fight off a UTI without assistance. However, if they only have a mild UTI without symptoms—and they happen to have a strong immune system—it is possible. Of course, by the time you know they have a UTI, they'll need veterinary assistance. This method can ONLY work if they don't show any symptoms, so it's not likely to help you any.

What About Treating A UTI At Home?

Before we continue, let us to warn you one more time—urinary tract issues can become quite severe in just a matter of hours. You should ONLY try the following home remedies on a female cat if they're able to pass some urine. DON'T use these home methods on a male cat, though. ALWAYS take males with urinary issues to the vet right away.

Cranberries

Just like with humans, giving your kitty some cranberries may help. Cranberries are acidic, and this can cause your feline friend's pH to become lower.

There are potentially a few major issues with this, however. Number one, cranberries are higher in sugar than your cat should have. Therefore, you'll need to use a cranberry supplement, instead. Additionally, even if some cranberry supplements clear up the problem, you won't know if they actually had an infection or if there was another issue.

Please note: Before you give your cat any cranberry supplements, make sure you test his or her pH

levels first. In fact, if you give your cat a supplement without checking their pH levels, you could end up making their UTI even worse. Therefore, check their pH levels, and ONLY give them a supplement if their urine is too alkaline.

Marshmallow Root

Marshmallow root strengthens the lining of their bladder, reduces inflammation, and kills bacteria. Even better, it acts as a diuretic, which means it'll help flush out urine and increase the flow of urine.

Apple Cider Vinegar

If you've checked your kitty's pH levels and they are too alkaline, you can try using apple cider vinegar. It gets rid of any harmful bacteria, and it'll also prevent harmful bacteria in the future.

Feed your cat half a teaspoon per day. Be sure to mix it into their food or with beef broth or chicken broth. PLEASE NOTE: Be sure that the broth you give them doesn't have a lot of sodium and doesn't have ANY onion in it. Onion is toxic to cats.

Chondroitin And Glucosamine

Normally, these supplements are used for joint pain, but they can also help a UTI. This works because glucosamine replaces a compound that's found in your cat's bladder's wall. Meanwhile, chondroitin helps prevent the compound from breaking down.

When you combine these two supplements, their bladder wall will be rebuilt, which will protect them from further bacteria damage. It will reduce their inflammation and other UTI symptoms. Give these supplements according to their weight. For every 10 pounds, provide 50 mg of chondroitin and 100 mg of glucosamine.

Bone Broth

The most important thing you can do to help prevent UTIs is make sure your cat stays properly hydrated. Because cats don't have a strong thirst instinct, you may need to ensure that they drink. To do this, provide them with tasty fluids such as bone broth without sodium.

Bone broth will help keep them hydrated, also providing your cat with minerals and nutrients to fight off an infection. The amino acids that are

found in bone broth, including arginine and glycine, can also help reduce inflammation.

Causes Of Feline Urinary Tract Disease

This is what my cat, Kali, ended up having. It is characterized by debris, stone, and/or crystals building up in your cat's urethra. If you're unlucky enough to deal with the same thing, you may wish to know what causes it.

- Spinal cord issues
- Incontinence due to a weak bladder or excessive water consumption
- UTI, inflammation, bladder infection
- A tumor or injury in their urinary tract
- Urethral plug
- Environmental or emotional stressors
- Congenital abnormalities

Can I Prevent My Cat From Getting A UTI In The First Place?

There are a few things you can do to give your cat a better chance of not developing a UTI.

First off, it's vital to ensure you're feeding them a high-quality diet.

Second, make sure they stay thin because thin, athletic cats don't have the same amount of health problems as their sedentary cousins.

Third, keep their litter boxes immaculately clean. Plus, don't forget the one box + one rule, which means that you need to have one litter box for each cat you have, plus one extra. And yes, this means if you have one cat, you need two litter boxes.

Finally, take them to the vet on a regular basis for checkups. This is the best way to ensure that everything about them remains in tip-top shape.

Final Thoughts

There is nothing about dealing with a UTI that's simple or easy. Don't let this cause you to do nothing, though. As with every other aspect of your cat's health, it is your responsibility to ensure that they get through it okay. Don't let your kitty down! Make them an appointment with their vet right away if you notice any of the symptoms of a UTI.

Welcome to the wonderful world of cat ownership! Do you happen to love cats and plants? If so, you've undoubtedly already noticed that your cat is attracted to most plant life. However, did you also know that several popular plants are toxic for your feline friend? Their level of toxicity varies from upsetting their stomach a little bit all the way to maybe causing death, so be sure you read this article before you allow your cat to mingle freely with plant life.

WHICH PLANTS ARE TOXIC?

There is a really long list of plants that cats shouldn't come into contact with, and many of the flowers and plants on this list are surprising. We'll list each item below, along with indicating whether it's highly toxic or merely toxic.

HIGHLY TOXIC PLANTS FOR CATS

This list of flowering plants includes:

- Asian Lily
- Climbing Lily
- Lily of the Valley
- Day Lily
- Rubrum Lily
- Easter Lily
- Stargazer Lily
- Tiger Lily
- Wood Lily

The particular lilies listed above have been known to cause tragic deaths to a variety of different cats, so be especially careful if you have any of these on your property. Lilies may be beautiful, but if you want to provide the safest environment possible for your kitty, you'll learn to forgo them.

TOXIC PLANTS FOR CATS

The plants listed below have all been proven to have some level of toxicity to cats. Although they may not kill your kitty, they can cause stomach upset, vomiting, and more. Therefore, we highly recommend that you also skip having any of these plants inside your home, and be careful placing them outdoors if your cat goes outside, too.

Please be aware that this isn't an exhaustive or conclusive list. Check the ASPCA website for more information on specific plant varieties.

Flowering plants:

- Amaryllis
- Hyacinth
- Hydrangea
- Autumn Crocus
- Narcissus
- Daffodil
- Poinsettia
- Elephant



TOXIC PLANTS FOR CATS

• Iris

- Bird of Paradise
- Kalanchoe
- Cyclamen

• Tulip

- Gladiola
- Dieffenbachia
- Oleander

Ferns:

- Asparagus Fern
- Emerald Feather
- Plumosa Fern
- Lace Fern

Indoor Plants:

- Aglaonema
- Arrowhead Vine
- Dracaena Fragrans
- Dracaena Marginata
- Dracaena Deremensis

Perennials:

- Aloe Vera
- Morning Glory
- Anthurium
- Mother-in-Law's Tongue
- Arum/Calla Lily
- Nightshade
- Hellebore
- Pussy's Ears

Succulents:

- Crown of Thorns
- Firestick
- Pencil Tree Plant
- Pencil Cactus
- Panda Plant
- Mother of Thousands
- Mother of Millions
- Devil's Backbone
- Chandelier Plant
- Jade Plant
- Snake Plant
- Silver Jade Plant
- String of Pearls
- String of Peas Plant

HOW CAN I HAVE TOXIC PLANTS AND KEEP MY CAT HEALTHY?

The obvious answer is to not have any toxic plants in your home, but we know that for some of you,



this answer simply won't do. Fortunately, there are some tricks you can try that will give your feline friend and all your plants a safe place to live.

ELEVATE YOUR PLANTS

Let's say that you really, really like a plant, but it's on the toxic list. As long as it's not a lily—which should never share a home with cats—you can have them provided you can ensure that your kitty can't touch them. How are you supposed to do this, though, when your cat can climb pretty much everywhere? The answer is to elevate your plants!

Don't put your plants on a windowsill or countertop. Instead, use a large planter, container, or hanging planter to place some distance between your cat and your plants. The idea is that you MUST elevate them in an area where your feline friend won't be able to chew or dig at them. If you can figure out how to do this in your home, you can have the best of both worlds.

TAKE PHOTOS OF THE PLANT IF YOUR CAT EATS PART OF IT

The reality is that even with our extensive list above, we haven't covered every single plant that can be toxic to your kitty. That's because there are literally HUNDREDS of plants your cat isn't safe around. Therefore, if your cat decides to chew on a plant, you'll want to take a photo of the plant to show your vet.

On the downside, your feline friend could be getting into a plant without your knowledge. When this happens, your vet will probably have to go on a fact-finding mission to determine what has happened. To save him or her some time, be sure to take a closer look at your plants. Look for any dirt or pebbles that are out of place, i.e., resting on a counter just outside the plant's container.

12 Even if you're sure that your plant wasn't disturbed by your kitty, snap a picture anyway. Cats can be

quite tricky, and it's entirely possible he or she got into one of your plants without leaving an obviously noticeable telltale indicator. Your vet can have a much easier time diagnosing your kitty if they know what type of plants are in his or her environment.

ALWAYS ACT IMMEDIATELY IF YOUR CAT INGESTS A TOXIC PLANT

Your feline friend may not show immediate side effects, but even if he's only been licking or chewing on the leaves, call your veterinarian right away. This goes double if you know or suspect that he's actually ingested part of the plant.

If your vet isn't available, call a 24/7 animal poison hotline. There are at least two available:

- ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center – 888.426.4435 (a fee may apply)
- Pet Poison Helpline – 855.764.7661 (a \$59 consultation fee will be applied)

12 OF THE MOST TOXIC PLANTS FOR CATS

Now, we're going to take a closer look at the Dirty Dozen – also known as plants that can seriously harm or even kill your cat.

Azaleas And Rhododendrons



There are more than 1,000 different related species in the azalea and rhododendron family, and they all present a threat to cats. Some of these may cause a more moderate level of toxicity to your kitty, while others are known to be severe.

Symptoms of rhododendron and azalea poisoning include:

• Lack of appetite	• Heart arrhythmias
• Drooling	• Seizures
• Diarrhea	• Transient blindness
• Vomiting	• Death
• Weakness	
• Tremors	

As you can see, these plants can cause serious harm to your kitty. As such, NEVER bring clippings into your house. Additionally, if you have these plants in your yard, you MUST ensure your cat never comes into contact with them.

Autumn Crocus

This flowering plant blooms in fall and is poisonous to cats, dogs, and horses. Unfortunately, it's especially toxic to cats due to its alkaloid colchicine content, and every part of the plant is highly dangerous. The worst part about autumn crocus poisoning is that it can either hit your cat right away or it may take days before they have any symptoms.

Symptoms of autumn crocus poisoning include:

- Vomiting
- Bloody diarrhea
- Drooling
- Difficulty breathing
- Liver and kidney damage
- Seizures
- Death

Again, this flowering plant shouldn't be anywhere near your cat or any other kitties.

Narcissus (Including Daffodils)

These spring perennials contain a poisonous agent called lycorine. Although every part of these plants are dangerous, be especially careful with the bulbs.

Symptoms of poisoning include:

- Vomiting
- Drooling
- Abdominal pain
- Diarrhea
- Extremely low blood pressure
- Cardiac arrhythmias
- Convulsions
- Difficulty breathing

None of these flowering plants should be allowed into your home. You also should NEVER plant these flowers anywhere in your yard, either.

Cyclamen



There are more than 20 different species of these perennial flowering plants, and they're all bad news for your feline friend. The roots and tubers are the most toxic, but every part of this plant includes saponins, which is a toxic component.

Symptoms may include:

- Vomiting
- Drooling
- Abnormal heart rhythm and rate
- Diarrhea
- Seizures
- Death

It is imperative that no cyclamens (also known as sowbread and Persian violet) be allowed into your home.

Dieffenbachia

This tropical flowering plant is also called tropic snow, spotted dumb cane, gold dieffenbachia, giant dumb cane, exotica perfection, dumb cane, or charming dieffenbachia.

Symptoms include:

- Drooling
- Burning sensation in the mouth
- Difficulty swallowing
- Vomiting

The toxic substance, insoluble calcium oxalate crystals, will not kill your kitty. However, it will cause EXTREMELY uncomfortable symptoms for cats, so don't keep this flowering plant in your home.

Lilies

Lilies are the most toxic plant for cats. Certain types of lilies are even more dangerous, including:

- Easter lilies
- Asiatic lilies
- Japanese snow lilies
- Stargazer lilies
- Rubrum lilies
- Tiger lilies
- Red lilies
- Wood lilies
- Daylilies
- Western lilies

Easter lilies are, by far, the most dangerous of this highly dangerous bunch. It only takes licking the pollen or drinking the water from a lily container to cause death. The most prominent side effect from ingesting any part of any of these plants is kidney failure.

Do NOT keep any type of lily in your house. It is simply too dangerous. If, however, you suspect your cat has come into contact with a lily, contact your vet IMMEDIATELY. Do NOT wait, as only prompt treatment can prevent them from dying.

Kalanchoe



This is a flowering houseplant that has many different names, including devil's backbone, mother-in-law plant, chandelier plant, and mother-of-millions. It contains toxins known as bufadienolides

Exposure to kalanchoe may cause the following symptoms:

- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Drooling
- Collapse
- Heart arrhythmias
- Seizures

Although this particular flowering plant may not cause death, it is considered too dangerous for pet owners to have inside their home.

Oleander

This popular, outdoor flowering shrub is found in warm climates. They also happen to contain cardiac glycoside toxins, which is why they can have an adverse affect on your cat's heart muscle.

Symptoms include:

- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Drooling
- Fatal heart abnormalities
- Tremors
- Incoordination
- Seizures

Every part of this plant is toxic, even the water in the vase that holds the plant. It is highly necessary for all cat owners to avoid these plants, both in their home and in their yard.

Hyacinth And Tulip

Both of these popular flowers come from the Liliaceae family, so you know they're bad news.

Symptoms of exposure include:

- Vomiting
- Drooling
- Diarrhea
- Tremors
- Depression

Although all parts of the hyacinth and tulip plant are dangerous, you need to be especially careful with their bulbs.

Sago Plant



This common plant can be found in tropical/subtropical areas such as Florida. Every part of this plant is poisonous for cats, but its seeds are the most deadly. That's because the sago plant contains cycasin, which is known to cause severe liver damage.

Symptoms of poisoning may include:

- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Black, tarry-looking stool

- Increased thirst
- Bruising
- Liver failure
- Lethargy
- Death

If you even suspect your cat has chewed on any part of a sago palm, you must take them to your vet for immediate assistance. Sadly, even if you're very fast getting them there and your vet provides a very aggressive treatment, your cat's odds of surviving sago palm poisoning are only 50%. The longer you wait, the lower their odds of survival.

HOW CAN THE VET HELP MY SICK CAT?

First off, you need to know that it's quite easy for a cat to become poisoned, whether by plants in your home, human food, human medication, insecticides, rodenticides, household products, or chemicals. In fact, the most common source of poisoning for a cat comes from them grooming themselves. And, as we all know, it's pretty much impossible to stop a cat from grooming.

If this happens to your cat, take him or her to the vet right away. It's easy to give them a diagnosis in most cases based on their physical signs and symptoms.

REMEMBER: If your cat ate a plant, got into some food, etc. and you know what they ingested, take proof to your vet. This can be a picture, a wrapper, etc. This will help your vet make an even faster diagnosis, which can be the difference between your feline friend living or dying.

Once your vet is sure they've been poisoned, there are a few different treatments that can be given to them, depending on what poisoned them.

- Fluid therapy (helps flush the toxin from their system)
- Ethanol (when they've been poisoned by antifreeze)
- Muscle relaxers (for tremors)
- Induce vomiting
- Anti-seizure medication
- Activated charcoal will be used if your vet suspects corrosion of their esophagus or internal bleeding

The prognosis for a cat that has been poisoned will depend on how quickly you get them to the vet. Toxins work their way into the body, so getting them help right away is one way that you can prevent further spread.

WHAT IS THE TYPICAL COST OF TREATING A POISONED CAT?

Because of all the different variables that can come into play, a poisoned cat can cost you anywhere from \$200 to \$15,000. The average cost in the US is around \$2,500. The best way to avoid having to break your bank when your feline friend is in trouble is to prevent them from getting into trouble in the first place.

Therefore, your best bet is to NOT have any toxic plants in your home. Compare the cost of treatment to how badly you want to have a toxic plant, and you should begin to see our point. Not only will your cat suffer tremendously—and possibly even die—but it could also cost you up to \$15,000. Even if you pay this amount, though, your cat could still end up dying. It's just not worth it.

CAN I SAFELY KEEP ANY PLANTS IN MY HOME?

Now that we've probably scared you away from having any plants in your house ever, we're going to change the subject by showing you some plants that you CAN have in your home! After all, not ALL plants are waiting to kill your cat.

PLEASE NOTE: Be aware that each of the following plants is known to be non-toxic, but this doesn't mean that ingesting them won't cause your cat some mild issues. If the plants on this list are ingested, they have the possibility of causing stomach upset (diarrhea and/or vomiting).

The only plants that are truly 100% safe for your feline friend are those that are made just for him or her, including catnip and catmint. If you put some basic precautions in place, though, you should be able to have the following plants without any major problems.

Flowering plants:

- Roses
- Sunflowers
- Gerberas
- Orchids
- Pansies
- African Violets
- Gerber Daisies
- Snapdragons
- Bottlebrushes
- Impatient
- Jasmine
- Kangaroo Paw
- Stock
- Statice
- Wax Flowers
- Asters
- Freesia
- Liatris
- Lisianthus
- Petunias
- Achira
- African Daisy
- Limonium
- Common Camellia

Ferns:

- Boston Fern

Indoor Plants:

- Catnip
- Catmint
- Cat Thyme
- Spider Plant
- Air Plants
- Areca Palm
- Rosemary
- Venus Fly Trap
- Swedish Ivy
- Autumn Olive

Succulents:

- Sweetheart Hoya
- Blue Echeveria

Again, this is a partial list. To find out about all of the toxic and non-toxic plants for your feline friend, be sure to visit the ASPCA's website.

FINAL THOUGHTS



Despite the fact that cats were originally intended to be wild, they shouldn't be exposed to a wide variety of different plants. And protecting them is harder than you might think because most cats LOVE to chew on plants. Therefore, if you're going to have any toxic plants in your house, be sure that you elevate them and keep a very close eye on your kitty. Better yet, just don't have any toxic plants.



CAN YOU REALLY GET TOXOPLASMOSIS FROM YOUR KITTY?

As a cat owner, you've undoubtedly heard a lot of buzz around the word toxoplasmosis. But what exactly does it mean and do you REALLY run a big risk of contracting it? In this article, we'll examine the facts and evidence surrounding toxoplasmosis, along with how common it truly is.

WHAT IS TOXOPLASMOSIS?

If you break down this scary-sounding word, you'll learn that toxoplasmosis is an infection that is caused by the parasite *Toxoplasma gondii*. You'll also discover that approximately 30 million Americans have been carriers of the parasite, which is just shy of 10% of the nation's population.

Of those that have it, the people with the most risk are those with a weakened immune system and infants who contracted the infection before they were born (passed to them from their mother, *in utero*). Of course, most of these individuals did NOT get toxoplasmosis from their cats.

WHAT CAUSES TOXOPLASMOSIS?

There are a number of different things that can cause toxoplasmosis, but cats have primarily been held responsible. In fact, this is why some people don't like cats – even if they're not aware of it. Because cats have been linked with toxoplasmosis, they can also sometimes be mischaracterized as being "dirty."

In truth, you can contract toxoplasmosis from any of the following sources:

- Drinking, eating, or swallowing soil that has been contaminated by cat feces. (NOTE: We are unsure why someone would eat or drink food that their cat's feces had come into contact with, but it happens.)

- Eating undercooked or raw animal meat—particularly from wild game, lambs, and pigs—that was infected with toxoplasmosis.
- Passed directly to an infant from their infected mother. This happens *in utero*.

IS TOXOPLASMOSIS CONTAGIOUS?

No. The sole risk is that pregnant women will pass it on to their fetuses. There is no other way to pass toxoplasmosis from one person to another. Therefore, if your partner has this parasite, you don't have to change anything about how you interact with them.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF TOXOPLASMOSIS?

Symptoms of a toxoplasmosis infection vary widely but are generally split into three main categories.

INFANTS (INFECTED PRE-BIRTH)

Infants have the highest risk, and they don't even have to come near toxoplasmosis. Instead, their mother is the one who picked up the infection and passed it on.

When they're born, an infant usually won't show any signs of having toxoplasmosis. The sad news, though, is that many of them WILL show symptoms later on in life. These include:

- Mental disability
- Vision loss
- Blindness
- Seizures
- Swollen glands
- Rash
- Jaundice
- An enlarged spleen or liver
- Problems with blood cells (for instance, anemia)

- Brain inflammation
- Problems with the heart and/or lungs

PLEASE NOTE: A fetus is at the most risk when their mother is infected in the early stages of pregnancy. It is possible for these mothers to either suffer a miscarriage or for their infant to be born very small and/or very early.

As a result, pregnant women **MUST** be more careful than usual when cleaning the litter box, but as long as they wear disposable gloves (and maybe a face mask) and wash their hands, there won't be any risk. Or, even better, they should have someone else help them clean up their cat's litter box while pregnant.

PEOPLE WITH A WEAKENED IMMUNE SYSTEM

If you're unlucky enough to have a weakened



immune system (typically caused by being on certain medications such as Humira), you could be in for a rough ride. Individuals who also happen to have HIV can expect the following:

- Confusion
- Headache
- Fever

Other symptoms that people may face include:

- Poor coordination
- Seizures
- Nausea
- Vomiting

Although this can be scary, please be aware that only about 3% of the US population has a weakened immune system.

PEOPLE WITH A HEALTHY IMMUNE SYSTEM

The majority of people with a healthy immune system will never face any symptoms, even if they do contract toxoplasmosis. If they do feel ill, however, it will probably be mild. These symptoms may include:

- Feeling like you've got the flu
- Swollen lymph glands
- Pain
- Muscle aches

Very rarely, you may also develop an eye disease that's been caused by toxoplasmosis. The symptoms involved with this include:

- Eye pain
- Poor vision
- Floaters (specks that look like they're swimming in your vision)

CAN A HUMAN GET TOXOPLASMOSIS MORE THAN ONCE?

Just as your feline friend has a minuscule risk of getting toxoplasmosis again, so do you. However, it's important to note that some people with a weakened immune system—such as those with HIV, cancer, or who take immunosuppressants—do run a very tiny risk of the infection reactivating itself.

Symptoms of this highly rare condition include:

- Confusion
- Headaches
- Fever
- Seizure
- Vision changes
- Facial paralysis
- Numbness
- Toxoplasmic encephalitis
- Feeling weak and/or losing motor skills
- Coma

HOW DO I PREVENT TOXOPLASMOSIS?

Now that you understand a bit about what toxoplasmosis is and what it can do to you, we're going to look at ways to prevent yourself from getting it. (HINT: You don't have to get rid of your cat)



- Cover outside sandboxes when they're not in use. This will prevent a cat from defecating in them.
- Change your cat's litter box(es) on a daily basis. Toxoplasmosis needs more than one day to become infectious.
- If you happen to be pregnant or have a weakened immune system, you can do one of two things:
 1. Get someone else to clean the litter box.
 2. Wear disposable gloves and wash your hands after.

If you do either of these things, you should be absolutely fine. And, by the way, everyone should thoroughly wash their hands with soap and water after cleaning a litter box.

- Don't eat any uncooked or undercooked meat.
- Always wash fruits and vegetables before eating them.
- Wash all your kitchen supplies that come into contact with raw meat.
- If you have a weakened immune system or have a reason to believe you've been infected, talk to your doctor about getting a toxoplasmosis blood test.
- Don't garden without wearing gardening gloves.
- Don't drink unpasteurized goat's milk.
- If you're pregnant, don't drink untreated/unfiltered water.
- Don't eat raw or undercooked clams, oysters, or mussels.
- Finally, the rarest of the rare: Toxoplasmosis is very rarely passed via a blood transfusion or organ transplant.

WHAT IS THE PROGNOSIS?

As long as you have a healthy immune system, you'll have a 99.99% chance of recovering without developing serious complications.

Children who contract the infection from their mother in utero have a more than 70% chance of still meeting all of their developmental milestones, as long as they receive prompt treatment.

Unfortunately, people who have a weakened immune system will often have toxoplasmosis in their brain. With treatment, however, there is a greater than 70% chance of survival. The rest will die, and we'll talk more about this later on.

HOW DO CATS SPREAD TOXOPLASMOSIS?



Did you know that only 1% or less of cats are actively infected with toxoplasmosis, and that it's extremely difficult to catch it? Yes, even if you pet your feline friend all day long, there's typically no risk. This is despite the fact that anywhere from 15–40% of cats have been infected with toxoplasmosis at some point.

Because that's the thing—toxoplasmosis doesn't stay active. When a cat contracts it, there is a two to three week period during which they could pass it on. After that, you have zero risk.

And how does a cat get toxoplasmosis, you might ask?

- By eating raw meat
- By NOT eating commercially available dry or wet food
- By going outside and coming into contact with an infected animal

Therefore, even if you let a stray cat into your home that just happens to be infected at that precise moment, they won't pose a threat to you after two weeks. And during the initial three weeks, they still won't pose much of a threat as long as you take care of them properly.

So, again, the only people who even have to take more basic precautions are those who are pregnant or have a weakened immune system. Even for those people, the risk is very, very negligible.

WHAT CAN I DO TO TREAT TOXOPLASMOSIS?

Okay, let's say that you do somehow contract toxoplasmosis. What happens next? Well, if you've got a normal immune system and only suffer from mild symptoms, you don't even need to seek treatment. It will clear up on its own (although it may take several weeks or even months to do so). If you happen to have an eye infection, too, you WILL need treatment for that.

Pregnant women who contract toxoplasmosis can be treated. Medication will be given, which may protect the fetus as well. Both the mother and infant need to be monitored throughout pregnancy and afterward, just to make sure that they both recover okay.

Medications to treat toxoplasmosis include:

- Pyrimethamine (Daraprim) – Fights the infection, but may block your body's usage of folic acid.
- Sulfadiazine – An antibiotic that's usually used in conjunction with pyrimethamine.
- Leucovorin calcium – Can be used with pyrimethamine to correct its effect on your body's usage of folic acid.

OKAY, SO WHAT IS MY REAL RISK OF CONTRACTING TOXOPLASMOSIS?

It is extremely unlikely that you'll get toxoplasmosis from your cat, even if he or she is infected. Per the CDC, you're "more likely to get [toxoplasmosis] from eating raw meat or from gardening."

As to your cat, he or she can typically only contract toxoplasmosis once in their life. It is VERY rare for a cat to become reinfected. Still, let's take a look at what has to happen for a kitty to become infected.

- It doesn't matter if your cat comes into contact with an infected animal. The ONLY thing that will give them toxoplasmosis is ingesting a tissue cyst. Without doing this, your cat will be 100% fine. Just be sure you don't feed them raw meat because they could ingest a tissue cyst, then.
- If you brought a stray cat into your home, they most likely have already had toxoplasmosis. They usually contract it as kittens and it moves through their system in two weeks.
- The oocysts that can infect you don't become active until 24 hours have passed. Therefore, if you clean your cat's litter boxes at least once every 24 hours, there is NO way you can get toxoplasmosis.
- The only way for a human to contract toxoplasmosis from their cat's litter box is if they come into contact with infected feces, don't wash their hands after, and let their hand come into contact with their mouth. Plus, their cat has to be within the two-week cycle of toxoplasmosis. The odds of all of these things happening are quite minuscule.

WHAT IS MY RISK OF DYING FROM TOXOPLASMOSIS?



The National Library of Medicine studied toxoplasmosis cases in Tanzania for 10 years. What they found was that 188 humans died from toxoplasmosis during the 10-year time period. In other words, approximately 18—19 people die per year, and that's in Tanzania.

For the most part, those who died from toxoplasmosis also had HIV. So, realistically speaking, your odds of not only contracting the parasite but also dying are pretty much nil, especially if you don't have HIV.

ONE OF THE 'NEGLECTED PARASITES' IN THE US

Toxoplasmosis joins five other parasites in being the six neglected parasites in the US. In other words, the CDC has determined that these six parasites are not known well enough by the general public. The list includes:

- Chagas disease
- Toxocariasis
- Cysticercosis
- Toxoplasmosis
- Cyclosporiasis
- Trichomoniasis

When it comes to contracting one or more of these parasitic infections, there are three major risk factors:

- Being born outside the US
- Being from certain ethnic or racial minority groups
- Having a lower income

Interestingly, although cats carry the parasite that causes toxoplasmosis, owning a cat does NOT increase your risk significantly.

YOUR BEST BET

As long as you don't partake of any other risky behaviors—such as eating raw or undercooked meat—the absolute best thing you can do to remove practically all risk is to keep your cat indoors. As long as your cat doesn't come into contact with infected meat, it can't develop toxoplasmosis.

This is another good argument for always keeping your cat inside. Other truly compelling arguments include:

- They'll live longer
- They'll be healthier

Meanwhile, the risks of letting them roam outside include:

- Being hit by a car
- Getting injured by another cat or dog
- Exposure to parasites and diseases
- Sudden weather issues
- Pet theft
- Poisoning
- Animal cruelty
- Eaten by wildlife

If you feel that you must let your cat outside, either build them a catio, take them on a walk with a leash, or place them inside a large dog crate/cage. That way, their risk of coming into contact with—and attempting to eat—another animal will be much, much lower.

MYTH BUSTER: WHAT ARE YOUR ODDS, REALLY?

Estimates state that anywhere from 200,000 to 1.1 million Americans will come into contact with toxoplasmosis on an annual basis. As long as you properly cook your food, you can toss out half of these cases, so that brings us to somewhere between 100,000 and 550,000 cases per year that may have been caused by a cat.

This means that your odds of getting toxoplasmosis from your feline friend are somewhere between 0.0003 and 0.0016 percent. With all the risks you accept into your daily life, this hardly seems like one to focus on.

FINAL THOUGHTS

As you can now tell, toxoplasmosis isn't something to get up in arms over. It's relatively rare, and it's even rarer still that you'll develop any serious symptoms. What you need to do is simply follow common sense guidelines.

- Wash your hands thoroughly after cleaning the litter box
- Get someone to help out if you're pregnant
- Don't let your cat roam freely

If you can handle these three basic guidelines, you should be able to be around as many cats as you'd like without taking on the risk of contracting toxoplasmosis. Again, you must remember that the CDC said that you're at a higher risk from gardening or eating raw meat than from being a cat owner.

Remember the facts the next time toxoplasmosis is brought up in the news cycle. Although it IS something to be careful about, your risk is NEVER as high as certain news organizations would like you to believe. So, rather than listening to fear-mongering, go play with your kitty instead!



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