

What to Feed Kitty

Diet is very important for your cat's health. Feeding your feline friend a good quality food will help him stay in good shape physically and psychologically; a poor diet can cause problems such as diabetes, obesity, food allergies, irritable bowel syndrome, and asthma. There are three important elements to a healthy diet for your cat:

- High levels of meat
- Low levels of carbohydrates
- Plenty of water

Protein

Cats (and all members of the family felidae) are obligate carnivores, which means they depend on the nutrients in meat for survival. Cats cannot digest vegetable matter efficiently and plant proteins lack vital amino acids, such as taurine, that cats need in their diet.



In the wild, a cat's diet is composed mainly of meat, with very little carbohydrate content. Ideally, your indoor kitty's diet should match this as closely as possible, with high levels of protein, moderate fat, and low levels of carbohydrates.

Check the ingredient list when choosing cat food: the first ingredient should be a recognizable muscle meat, such as chicken, turkey, beef, or salmon. Meal and by-products (beaks, feet, feathers, bones, etc.) should be avoided, as they provide little nutritional value.

Carbohydrates

Many foods contain grains, such as corn or rice, or flour products; these ingredients are added by pet food manufacturers because they are a cheap way to bulk up the food. Grains cannot be digested properly by cats, and they are full of carbohydrates, to which cats can become addicted (just like humans!). Cats on food with a high carbohydrate content have a tendency to overeat and can become obese.

Some widely available brands of cat food that we recommend include EVO, Wellness, and Blue Buffalo. Read more on feline diets on www.catinfo.org

Water



Cats have a low thirst drive, which means they aren't naturally inclined to drink much. A diet composed entirely of dry food will make them dehydrated. Even short periods of dehydration can lead to problems such as urinary tract blockages, kidney stones, and bladder infections; over time, chronic kidney disease may develop. To ensure your kitty is getting enough water, feed her wet food and make sure that there is always fresh water available. A pet water fountain is a good way to encourage kitty to drink more.

How Much to Feed Kitty

Kittens require more food per pound of body weight to support their growth than do adult cats. Growing kittens may need to eat up to three times per day. Adult cats typically do well eating one or two times per day. Free feeding may work for kitties who show self-control, but is not a good idea for kitties who like to snack. It's a good idea to check the caloric content of your kitty's food. When in doubt, talk to your vet!