

# New Kitten Handout

---

*Congratulations on your new kitten! We feel that your initial visit with your new kitten is very important. Since a lot of information will be covered, we have written down some points you may wish to remember.*

## 1. Vaccinations/ Viral diseases

**RCCP** (Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis, Calici, Chlamydia, and Panleukopenia): This vaccine is commonly referred to as the “Distemper/ Rhino” combination vaccine. We recommend the first dose be given between 6-8 weeks of age and then repeated every 3 weeks until they are over 15 weeks of age and then annually for life.

**RABIES:** Rabies vaccine is required for all cats. Most exposure to the Rabies virus in this area occurs indoors from bats. The first vaccine is given when the kitten is at least 12 weeks of age, boosters are annual.

**FELINE LEUKEMIA VIRUS** (FeLV or FELK): This contagious retrovirus is a leading cause of death in cats. It is transmitted from cat to cat by licking or biting and may be passed from the mother cat to her kittens during pregnancy. We recommend all cats be tested for FELK. Strictly indoor cats do not require FeLV vaccinations. The FELK vaccine is first given around 12 weeks of age, repeated in 3-4 weeks then annually.

**FELINE IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS** (FIV): This is another retrovirus, and is in the same class as the human AIDS virus. We recommend all new cats be tested for FIV once over 12 weeks of age. This virus causes an immune deficiency syndrome in cats and is primarily spread by bite wounds. FIV vaccine is available but is not recommended. NOTE: THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT EITHER FELK OR FIV POSE A HUMAN HEALTH RISK.

**FELINE INFECTIOUS PERITONITIS** (FIP): FIP is a viral disease of cats that, once contracted, is almost invariably fatal. A nasal drop vaccine is available but its efficacy is controversial. We do not recommend FIP vaccination.

## 2. Diet

Cats fed free choice dry food frequently become obese, and obesity has serious health consequences. As far as brands are concerned, we would recommend selecting major recognizable brand names like Science Diet, Purina One or Iams. It is ok to feed a mix of wet and dry food, as long as you take into account the extra calories.

## 3. Litter Box

Most kittens take to the litter box naturally. Either scoop type litter or clay litters are acceptable. With the scoop litters both urine and feces are scooped away and disposed of daily. Clay litters should be completely changed every few days as the urine will saturate the litter. We don't recommend the scented litters because some cats are sensitive to the chemicals they contain. The litter box should be located reasonably close to where the cat spends his/ her time, but not too close to the food. There should be at least one litter box per cat up to a reasonable number.

## 4. External Parasites (fleas)

Most of the cats and kittens we see being adopted have at least a few fleas. Revolution is an easy to use and very effective topical treatment that will control fleas, mites and internal parasites on cats and kittens 8 weeks of age or older. Comprehensive flea control includes treatment of the environment (home) as well.

## 5. Internal Parasites (worms)

We recommend routinely worming your kitten for roundworms (ascarids). This is done at the time of the initial vaccination visits. **It is a good idea to have a fecal exam done as soon as possible and then annually.** Tapeworms can be picked up at any time through the ingestion of an infected flea or rodent. The rice-like or

sesame seed-like segments are usually seen on the stool or on the hair around the back end. The only prevention is flea control.

#### **6. Ovariohysterectomy (spay)**

Spaying a cat prior to the first heat cycle will minimize the chances of mammary cancer in the older cat. We therefore recommend that in cats not intended for breeding the ovariohysterectomy (spay) be performed at 5-6 months of age.

#### **7. Castration (neuter)**

Almost all cat owners neuter male cats to help prevent spraying, roaming, fighting etc. Feline AIDS (FIV virus) is quite common in free-roaming un-neutered male cats because this virus is transmitted in saliva via bite wounds. We recommend male cats not intended for breeding be neutered at 6-9 months of age.

#### **8. Onchyectomy (declaw)**

If you desire to have your cat declawed (front 2 or all 4) the ideal time to do this is at 3-4 months of age. There are many misconceptions concerning declawing and we would be happy to discuss this issue with you.

#### **9. Dental Care**

Certain diets such as Science Diet Oral Care and prescription TD may be helpful in preventing periodontal disease. Periodic professional cleanings are necessary for most cats. We will check the condition of your cat's oral cavity and recommend appropriate care at your regularly scheduled exam.

#### **10. Cat Toys**

There are many varieties of commercial toys available for cats, and most of the time these are fine. Ribbons, needles with thread attached, and other linear objects can cause serious problems when ingested by your cat and should be avoided.

#### **11. Training**

Cats are very intelligent animals but enjoy their independence and are therefore not as eager to please like most dogs are. This does not mean they cannot be taught. Cats usually respond to repeated enforced messages like "get down!" (for a cat on the table) or removing the cat. Loud noises like banging on the table or shaking a jar of coins can help. Repetition and consistency are the keys here as these things are a battle of wills. Food treats can be helpful. Cats do not respond well to physical punishment; this is likely to cause more problems than it solves. Some cats respond to being squirted with water from a squirt gun. It is important that the cat not associate you with the water, so don't let it see you doing this if possible. Scratching posts should be introduced immediately, as your cat must scratch on something. Catnip and positive reinforcement encourage this natural requirement.

#### **12. Identification**

We recommend some kind of identification for all pets. We offer Avid microchips, a permanent identification given by a simple injection during an office visit or during a routine surgery. Visit [www.avidid.com](http://www.avidid.com) for more information on microchipping.

#### **13. Carriers**

We strongly encourage you to always bring your cat here in a carrier. Traveling is unnatural to cats; they are very insecure outside of their personal territory and can become frightened and get lost. There are many excellent carriers, ones with top-loading features are best.

#### **14. Emergencies**

For afterhours emergencies, please contact Northeast Indiana Veterinary Emergency and Specialty Hospital (NIVES) at (260) 426-1062. They are a 24 hour emergency/ critical care center and provide excellent care.

*It is our goal to provide you with the highest quality services and information so you can have the best possible relationship with your cat. Please call us if we can help you in any way!*