

Preventing health problems

Cats are very good at hiding signs of illness. You can prevent certain problems occurring by early detection and some basic health care.

MOST PEOPLE ARE GOOD at taking their cat to the vet when they realise that it is ill. However, cats are very good at hiding early signs of early illness, and it can be difficult to notice that something is wrong until the cat's disease has become very severe, a stage at which it may then be difficult to treat satisfactorily. You can have a large impact on your cat's health by trying to prevent certain problems occurring and maximising the detection of any illnesses as early as possible.

Preventative health care falls into two main categories, **routine preventative treatment** and **routine checks** to detect early problems.

Routine preventative treatment

Vaccination

Vaccinations are available for a number of different diseases in cats, the most important ones being caused by viruses. The viruses are herpes virus and calicivirus, which cause 'cat-flu', panleukopenia virus that can cause diarrhoea, vomiting and often death in young kittens, and the feline leukaemia virus. For further details refer to the relevant FAB information sheets on www.fabcats.org

After the initial vaccination, regular boosters are required to keep cats protected. Remember your cat's yearly booster is not just a vaccination, it will also form an important part of preventative health care by providing your vet with an opportunity to perform a routine check up and to look for early signs of disease.

It is important to be aware that vaccinations are not 100 per cent effective against preventing these diseases, but are very helpful at helping to prevent them.



What else can I do to reduce the risk of my cat developing an infectious disease?

- Keep the number of cats in your household as low as possible. It is generally not recommended to exceed five cats in one household as this would dramatically increase the risk of infectious diseases.
- Keep the cat's living environment, litter trays and feeding bowls clean.
- Keep your cat in at dawn and dusk as this is when most fights with other cats will occur.
- Discourage your cat from hunting.
- Avoid feeding raw meat.

Flea treatment

Fleas are a common problem in cats and may be difficult to spot. They can cause many skin problems, as well as being a potential vector for the spread of some infectious

diseases. A flea treatment obtained from your veterinary surgeon should be used regularly. For further details refer to FAB information sheets on www.fabcats.org.

Worm treatment

As with flea treatments, many different worming treatments are available, but the most effective treatments can be obtained through your veterinary surgeon. All cats, but particularly those that are known to hunt, should be wormed regularly. For further details refer to FAB information sheets on www.fabcats.org.

Diet

Cats have several very important essential nutrient requirements and severe problems can be encountered if these are not met. It is therefore important that a balanced diet formulated for cats is fed. This is most easily done by feeding one of the many excellent commercial diets that are now available.

Routine checks

What can I check myself at home?

- Body weight
 - Weigh healthy young to middle aged cats about once a year and note the weight
 - Older cats (over 12 years old) should be weighed every six months
- Monitor your cat for:
 - Coughing or sneezing
 - Nasal/ocular discharge
 - Excessive grooming or scratching
 - Vomiting or diarrhoea
 - Change in frequency of urination and defaecation
 - Any difficulty passing urine and/or faeces
 - Water intake
 - Food intake
 - Changes in behaviour

Regularly check cat for:

- Coat and skin condition
- Lumps and bumps
- Wounds or swellings

Your vet may ask you to:

- Collect a urine sample using non-absorbent litter in a litter tray
- Collect a faecal sample if your cat has diarrhoea

What important things can my vet detect during a check-up?

- Weight problems (too much or too little)
- Dental and mouth problems
- Internal or external lumps and bumps
- Heart murmurs and abnormal rhythms
- Abnormal lung sounds
- Urine test results – especially picking up early kidney disease, or diabetes
- Thyroid gland enlargement
- High blood pressure

Information on these conditions is available on our website

www.fabcats.org

FAB's full range of Cat Friendly Practice leaflets

Bringing your cat to the vet
Giving medicine to your cat
Feeding a poorly cat
Your cat is having an operation
Preventing health problems
Insuring your cat
Choosing a boarding cattery
Common household poisons and cats
Why do cats..?

For more information on cat care
www.fabcats.org

The Feline Advisory Bureau (FAB)

Set up almost 50 years ago, FAB's work now provides essential information for cat owners and expert information for people working with cats such as veterinary surgeons, breeders, cattery owners and rescue centres. Through our feline expert panel (a group of veterinary surgeons funded by FAB to specialise in feline care at UK veterinary universities) FAB has gathered a wealth of information on both common and rare conditions.

We're not just interested in veterinary treatment; our experts understand that a cat's home environment and lifestyle can have a huge influence on its health and well being. FAB is interested in the whole cat! The more owners understand cats and their behaviour the better they will be at spotting problems and giving TLC when a cat needs it most.

For over 400 pages of information on cat care go to FAB's website. We're already helping over 1 million cat owners a year.

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