

Keeping Cat Veterinary Visits Stress-Free... For Everyone!

For some cat owners and veterinarians, cat veterinary visits can be very stressful, but it doesn't have to be that way. Here are some simple tips that can help to make it better:

1. Make your cat travel-savvy.

Get your cat used to traveling. Start them at a young age for your best results.

2. Make the carrier your cat's "home away from home."

Make it a comfortable resting, feeding or play location. Keep the transport carrier out and accessible in the home, not just when you're taking your cat somewhere.

3. Let them play "peek-a-boo."

Let your cat have a hiding place in the carrier by placing a towel or blanket from your home inside the carrier, and drape another one over part of the carrier. Using a familiar blanket or towel from home can also provide your cat some comfort while at the veterinary office.

4. Mix it up. Think about it – would you be happy getting in the car if every car trip meant a trip to the doctor's office? Mix in some fun trips, or maybe a social visit to the veterinary office just to get a treat or two.

5. Travel light. If you don't feed your cat prior to travel, you'll make it less likely to get motion sickness. Plus, if it's a little bit hungry, your cat might be more interested in the treats your vet has to offer, and it could make the visit more pleasant for your cat.

6. Avoid sounds that may mimic hissing (eg, whispering) and avoid loud noises. Keep cats away from dogs and out of visual range of other cats.

7. It's not a staring contest. Avoid having the doctor making eye contact with your cat. Have your cat face you, ask the doctor to avert their gaze, or blink slowly while they observe your cat.

8. No surprises. Once in the exam room, allow your cat time to adjust to the surroundings by removing the top or opening the door of the carrier. Your cat should ideally remain in the bottom half of the carrier for as much of the exam as possible; this allows it to adjust to the examiner and the environment from a familiar, "safe" place.

9. Don't be above bribery. Distract and reward cats with tasty treats, toys, catnip and/or play.

10. Less is more. Handle cats using minimal restraint. For more information, the AAFP offers guidelines for handling cats during veterinary examinations.



The Cat
Doctors

www.tampabayvets.net

Know the Signs Your Cat May Be Sick

All cats need at least an annual preventive care exam to verify that they're healthy and not harboring some hidden illness. It is extremely difficult to tell when a cat is sick or hurting, so when owners are unaware of what to look for, they may be missing vital clues that their cat is not feeling well," says Dr. Jane Brunt, executive director of the CATalyst Council, "One of the easiest ways to ensure your cat is healthy is to take it to the veterinarian for regular exams."

But just in case, the CATalyst Council is offering these clues that may be a sign that your cat needs to see a veterinarian . . . now.

- 1. Changes in Interaction** - If your cat is generally independent and suddenly turns into your shadow, or the reverse, it may be because your cat isn't feeling well.
- 2. Changes in Activity** - A change in daily routine or in your cat's activity level could be an indication that your cat isn't well or has a medical condition like arthritis.
- 3. Changes in Chewing or Eating Habits** - An increase in consumption may be a sign of diabetes or hyperthyroidism while a decrease may point to dental problems or even cancer.
- 4. Changes in Water Intake** - Drinking more or less water may be a sign of a health problem such as kidney disease or diabetes.
- 5. Unexpected Weight Loss or Weight Gain** - Weight doesn't always go up or down with a change in appetite. There are disorders that cause weight loss or gain even without a change in consumption.
- 6. Bad Breath** - Dental disease, kidney disease, and digestive disorders can all lead to halitosis in cats.
- 7. Changes in Grooming Habits** - Your cat works hard to look its best, which is why if you notice your cat being less fastidious than it usually is, it may be a sign that your cat has dental disease or arthritis.
- 8. Changes in Sleeping Habits** - An increase or decrease in the amount of sleep your cat gets, or a change in sleeping habits, all indicate that your cat may not be feeling its best.
- 9. Changes in Vocalization** - If your cat starts "talking" to you more than usual, or suddenly becomes very quiet, it may be because of a medical condition. Anxiety, feline cognitive dysfunction, high blood pressure and hyperthyroidism are all reasons behind a change in vocalization.
- 10. Signs of Stress** - Cats like routines and a stable environment and are prone to stress-related illness. Anxiety can cause cats to exhibit behavioral changes (like eliminating outside of the litter box) as well as physical changes.

We encourage owners to take their cats to the veterinarian not only to ensure they are healthy, but to establish a health profile or baseline for their cats. Owners should be tracking their cat's normal behaviors so that they know if they are exhibiting subtle signs that they are ill. Once a year - on your birthday, during Preventive Healthcare Month, near a holiday - just pick a date and get your feline friend to the veterinarian at the same time every year. It's a good habit to form and one where you - and your cat - will benefit!

