

# Vet Visits Don't Have to Be **STRESSFUL**



It can be downright difficult getting our cats to the vet, however, routine preventive healthcare is essential for your cat to live a long, happy, healthy life.

Many cat owners are all too familiar with “the chase” that ensues as soon as the cat sees the carrier. August 22nd is National Bring Your Cat to the Vet Day and here are 5 tips on easing the stress of the vet visit for your cat AND yourself:

**Understanding your cat's behavior.** Cats are most comfortable with the familiar, and need time to adjust to new surroundings and experiences. The visit to the veterinarian is often difficult because the carrier, car, and the veterinary hospital are usually unfamiliar. Respect your cat's need for time to become familiar with new situations, people, and places. Stay calm. Cats can sense our anxiety or frustrations, which may cause them to become fearful or anxious. Cats do not learn from punishment or force. Give rewards to encourage positive behavior.

**Help your cat become comfortable with the carrier.** The goal is for your cat to learn to associate the carrier with positive experiences and routinely enter voluntarily. Make the carrier a familiar place at home by leaving it in a room where your cat spends a lot of time. Place familiar soft bedding inside the carrier as well as treats or toys. It may take days or weeks before your cat starts to trust the carrier. Remain calm, patient, and reward desired behaviors.



**What type of carriers are best?** The best carriers are inexpensive hardsided carriers that open from the top and the front, and can also be taken apart in the middle. An easily removable top allows a cat which is fearful to stay in the bottom half of the carrier for exams. Avoid carriers that require a cat to be pulled from or dumped out for an exam. Choose carriers that are sturdy, secure, and stable for the cat, as well as easy for you to carry. Carriers should be seat-belted into the car to keep your cat safe.

**Take your cat to a Cat Friendly Practice®.** Designated **Cat Friendly Practices®** (CFP) have made changes to decrease stress and provide a more calming environment for you and your cat. Staff have also been trained in feline-friendly handling and understanding feline-specific behavior in order to increase the quality of care for your cat.



They have also made changes to reduce the stress of the visit such as feline-friendly waiting areas, feline-centric exam rooms, as well as staff training on feline-friendly handling techniques and recognizing subtle, early signs of fear or anxiety in order to adapt appropriately. For more information or to find a CFP near you, visit: [www.catvets.com/cfp](http://www.catvets.com/cfp).

## **Coming Home—Keeping the Peace in a Multi-cat Household**

Cats are very sensitive to smells, and unfamiliar smells can result in one cat no longer recognizing another. Help avoid problems cats perceiving the other as a stranger following a veterinary visit. Leave the returning cat in the carrier for a few minutes to see how all of your cats react. If you sense tension between the cats, or if previous home-comings have resulted in conflict, keep the cat in the carrier and take it to a separate room to avoid potential injury from an upset cat. Provide food, water, and litter box for a minimum of 24 hours while it regains the more familiar smell of home. A synthetic feline pheromone (Feliway®) can help provide the sense of familiarity.

