

Your Cat's Life Stages



What your cat requires will change as they age. Cats' lives are broken into four stages: kittens, young adults, mature adults, and seniors. Each stage requires special attention to certain health and behavioral areas. The chart in this brochure includes a breakdown of life stages your cat advances through, and concentrates on how to best support them in each stage. Use this information to observe your cat at home, as well as discuss these items with your veterinarian during your cat's checkups.

Items to Focus on During Each Life Stage

Observe at home and discuss with your veterinarian

	KITTEN	YOUNG ADULT	MATURE ADULT	SENIOR
Veterinary Checkups	At least once per year (more frequent for cats with health conditions)			At least every 6 months
At All Ages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch for subtle signs of behavior, illness, pain, and stress • Understand normal feline behaviors and that changes in your cat's behavior can be significant • Get your cat comfortable with the carrier • Schedule routine checkups for your cat which can help them long-term • Discuss identification for your cat (microchipping) • Understand scratching is a natural, normal feline behavior; learn about caring for claws • Discuss pet insurance and financial planning options 			
Medical History	Common conditions for specific breeds and genetic concerns (if applicable)	Vomiting, hairballs, diarrhea, changes in behavior, and grooming habits	Changes in appetite, hydration, vomiting, diarrhea, vocalization, nighttime activity, mobility, vision, litter box habits, and grooming habits	
Extra Focus During the Checkup	Infectious diseases, genetic findings, and discuss sterilization (spay/neuter)	Heart, lungs, skin, and teeth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased focus on the abdomen, heart, lungs, thyroid, kidneys, eyes, and teeth • Muscle and bone assessment, and thorough pain and arthritis assessment 	
Nutrition and Weight Management	Food being fed, amount being fed, frequency of feeding, and food toy/puzzles	Weight gain, obesity risks, play, and exercise	Weight loss and weight gain, type of food being fed to ensure it provides what your mature adult/senior cat needs, and prescription diets (if needed)	
Behavior and Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introducing kittens to people and other pets • Petting, brushing, nail trimming, and grooming • Proper play (not using hands or feet as toys to avoid risk of future aggressive behavior) • Becoming comfortable with the carrier, travel, and veterinary visits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in cat-cat and human-cat interactions • Gentle handling techniques for acceptance of checkups for mouth, ears, and feet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjusting environmental needs as your cat ages • Easy accessibility to the litter box, warm soft bed, and food/water • Watching closely for subtle behavior changes 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and location of resources (litter box, food, water, sleeping areas) • Housing (indoor/outdoor/partial outdoor access), hunting activity, and others in the home • Housemate cats and their usual interactions • Changes in behavior, problematic or unwanted behaviors, and use of positive reinforcement • Environmental needs (toys, scratching posts, resting places, play) 			
Litter Box	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Litter box setup, location, litter type, cleaning, and litter preference • Normal toileting behavior 	Review and adjust litter box size and location to accommodate growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Litter box location to avoid stairs • Review and adjust litter box size, location, and cleaning regimens as necessary 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toileting habits, stool appearance, and litter ball size • Urination or defecation outside the litter box • Differences between toileting and marking (territory) behaviors • Litter box management (number of boxes, size, location, litter type, cleaning) 			
Oral Health	Getting used to mouth handling and brushing/wiping of teeth	Specific dental food type (if needed)	Changes in appearance of your cat's mouth, if your cat appears to be in pain when eating, or if your cat is not eating or chewing	
	Dental examination, dental disease, preventive care, and home care with brushing/wiping of teeth			
Parasite Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risks of parasites for cats regardless of indoor/outdoor status • Risks of exposure based on lifestyle, geographic location, and travel • Year-round treatment for the prevention of heartworms, fleas, ticks, and intestinal parasites (regardless of indoor/outdoor status) • Zoonotic risks (diseases passed between animals and people) 			



There are many ways to keep your cat healthy and happy throughout their life. As a member of the family, your cat deserves the very best possible care. One of the best ways to ensure your cat stays happy and healthy is by making sure they have their preventive care checkups. Your veterinarian will perform a thorough checkup and discuss the information in this brochure based on your cat's life stage. Utilize this information to observe your cat each day and call your veterinarian immediately if you see any changes in your cat's behavior or routine.

**For more information on feline life stages,
visit www.catfriendly.com/life-stages.**

**You are an important member of your cat's healthcare team.
You are instrumental in helping with the success of
treatments and improved healthcare for your cat.**



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This brochure was developed from the 2021 AAHA/AAFP Feline Life Stage Guidelines.
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