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PREGNANT CAT: HOW TO TELL IF CAT IS PREGNANT & HOW TO CARE FOR HER



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Article checked by a vet

You might have bred your cat deliberately, or you might suspect she has an unplanned pregnancy. Either way, it's important to know how to tell if she really is pregnant and how to care for her if she is.

In this guide, we'll tell you all the most important things to know about pregnancy in cats. We'll explain how to tell if a cat is pregnant, what the different cat pregnancy stages are and how to care for a pregnant cat. As well as that, we'll also tell you some of the common reasons to call a vet during delivery.

Having kittens is exciting for you and your cat, and most cat pregnancies are actually fairly easy. However, it's still important to make sure you're well-prepared.

Some common cat pregnancy signs are:

- Swelling and pinkening nipples
- Behavioural changes
- Vomiting or going off food
- Weight gain

It's important to make sure you always have a cat pregnancy confirmed by a vet. It's often difficult to tell if a cat is pregnant until late in the pregnancy. As well as this, a vet will also be able to rule out a false pregnancy.

Early signs of pregnancy in cats

How do I know if my cat is pregnant? Pregnancy is difficult to spot in the early stages, and it often doesn't become clearly visible until the final 3-4 weeks.

There are normally no signs at all for the first 2-3 weeks, and a cat's heat cycles will actually continue during this time.

Here are some signs you might start to spot after the first 2-3 weeks:

- Your cat's nipples might become pinker and slightly swollen (known as 'pinking up')
- Your cat might be more docile or attention-seeking than normal
- Morning sickness (vomiting and going off food) might happen after around four weeks
- Your cat might noticeably start to gain weight. Usually, this is not until about four weeks into a pregnancy

Make sure you have your cat's pregnancy confirmed by a vet. It's easy to miss pregnancy, and it's also a good idea to rule out a mistake in thinking your cat is pregnant or a pseudopregnancy. Your vet will also be able to give your cat a checkup.

Cat pregnancy stages

Cats usually give birth after a 63 to 65 day gestation period, which can be divided into three 21-day trimesters.

Most of the obvious changes won't happen until the last trimester.

In this section, we'll look at what to expect at each of the cat pregnancy stages.

Early stage (weeks 1-3)

In the first 1-3 weeks, it's often hard to tell if a cat is pregnant.

In the first two weeks after conceiving, the eggs won't even be implanted in the cat's uterus. At this time, her [cat heat cycles\(open in new tab\)](#) will continue, and she can even get pregnant by other tomcats.

Towards the end of this period, the eggs will become implanted, and subtle hormonal changes will begin to start.

Your cat's heat cycles will end, and you might start to notice her nipples swelling and becoming pinker ('pinking up'). You might also notice that your cat starts to become more friendly and attention seeking, while simultaneously being less tolerant of other pets and disturbances.

As soon as you suspect your cat might be pregnant, be careful to be gentle when you're handling her.

Middle stage (weeks 4-6)

It becomes easier to tell if a cat is pregnant during the second trimester.

After around four weeks, you might start to notice that your cat gets morning sickness, similar to how humans do. She might go off her food or even occasionally vomit. This can happen at any time of day.

Some morning sickness is normal with a pregnant cat, but it's important to speak to a vet if your cat is vomiting frequently or if you're worried she's not getting enough food.

You can also ask your vet to confirm the pregnancy with an ultrasound after around four weeks.

As the second trimester progresses, you might also notice your cat steadily gaining weight. Towards week 6-7, you should notice that she has a nice, round tummy and that her appetite starts to increase.

After you have the pregnancy confirmed by your vet, you should avoid picking up your cat.

Late stage (weeks 7-9)

In the last trimester, it becomes more obvious that your cat is pregnant.

It's likely that your cat will be more friendly towards you and will seek reassurance and affection from you more often. As well as this, she's also likely to start showing nesting instincts. This is where she seeks out a quiet, safe and comfortable place to give birth. Normally, most nesting behaviour happens in the last two weeks.

As well as behavioural changes, your cat will also change physically. Her nipples will become more swollen, and she may groom frequently around them or in the area beneath her tail. As well as this, she will continue to eat and drink frequently and will visibly gain more weight.

As she gets close to giving birth, she might appear to be anxious or restless.

You should keep your cat indoors for the final two weeks before the kittens are due. This will ensure your cat nests inside and that your kittens are born indoors, in a safe, warm home. Otherwise, cats can nest and give birth in hidden outside locations.

Preparing & caring for a pregnant cat

Pregnant cats should, ideally, be vaccinated before pregnancy. The vaccination and pregnancy should also be coordinated by a vet. Worming and other forms of parasite prevention can continue in pregnancy. However, it's crucial that you only use pregnancy-safe medicines.

When it comes to caring for a pregnant cat, it's important to be gentle with her and make sure she has everything she needs.

Here are the most important things for a pregnant cat:

- A quiet, comfortable location for nesting – Comfortable blankets and sheets, cardboard boxes and purpose built cat beds all make a good choice. Ideally, you will be able to give your cat a choice of locations.
- A good diet – Cats need to eat lots of calories when they're pregnant. Feed your cat high quality kitten food or cat food designed for pregnant cats. Give her frequent meals, and make sure she has as much food as she wants. Also, make sure she always has easy access to fresh, clean water.
- A stress free environment – Make sure your cat is not put under any additional stress while she's pregnant. Also, give her all the cuddles and attention she needs to get through her pregnancy.
- Health checks – Keep in contact with your vet and make sure you inform them about anything you think might be an issue.

Pregnancy is a great time to learn about [cat health\(open in new tab\)](#). Not only do you need to care for your pregnant cat, but you'll soon also have a litter of kittens to look after.

When to call the vet & emergency signs

Cats will normally give birth by themselves without needing a vet. You should aim to supervise the birth from a distance that your cat is comfortable with, in case there is a reason to call a vet.

The main reasons to call a vet during delivery are:

- Prolonged labour
- Heavy bleeding
- If a kitten is stuck in the birth canal
- Visible contractions for more than 20 minutes without a kitten being born
- Extreme lethargy
- Fever

Don't forget that you also need supplies ready for when your [new kittens\(open in new tab\)](#) arrive.

FAQs

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1. How do I tell if my cat is pregnant?

It's often difficult to know how to tell if your cat is pregnant, and the signs do not

usually become obvious until quite far into a pregnancy. Some signs to look for in the early stages are swollen and pink nipples, affectionate behaviour, morning sickness and weight gain. The best thing, however, is to get your vet to check her.

2. How long are cats pregnant for?

Cats are normally pregnant for 63 to 65 days, which is around nine weeks. While most cats give birth in the normal time period, sometimes it can happen a few days earlier or a few days later without there being any problems. In other cases, health problems may cause an excessively early or late delivery.

3. What does a pregnant cat's belly look like?

A pregnant cat will normally start to develop slightly swollen and pinker nipples after around two weeks of pregnancy. After around four weeks, her belly might also start to become visibly rounder. As the pregnancy continues, her belly will continue to grow, her nipples will swell further, and she may groom her belly.

4. How to care for a pregnant cat for the first time?

Caring for a cat that is pregnant for the first time is usually similar to caring for a cat that has given birth before. However, you might find that a cat that is pregnant for the first time is more vulnerable to stress or needs more comforting and reassurance from you. Make sure you prioritise calm and are consistently kind and gentle with your cat during its pregnancy.

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