

WHAT DO CATS EAT?



Article checked by a vet

Domestic cats are carnivores by nature, and to survive must eat mostly animal-based proteins, but they need a balanced diet containing the correct mixture of protein, fats, nutrients, carbohydrates and minerals to stay in the best of health. Too much or too little can lead to cats becoming overweight, underweight or suffering from avoidable health conditions.

Cats' nutritional needs vary with their age and activity levels. They can be fed a mixture of high quality wet cat food (such as Perfect Fit™ wet food), or dry cat food (such as Perfect Fit™ dry food) to enjoy a nutritionally balanced and varied diet. You can also provide cat-friendly food supplements as part of foods cats can eat safely, to help support a well-functioning immune system and maintain a healthy cat weight. If you're wondering what do cats eat, and which food type you should opt for, varying their food type can avoid vitamin deficiencies as well as providing interesting food textures and flavours to keep mealtimes

fun and appealing to your pet.

What will my cat enjoy eating

If you ask adult cat owners what do cats like to eat, most will agree that cat foods made using high quality meat or fish protein are usually their pet's favourite, along with the occasional treat. Experts advise that animal protein should form the majority of your cat's diet - up to 60% - with a high proportion of good quality fats to help boost energy levels and provide essential fatty acids for normal bodily functions. However, cats are natural hunters and like to forage for their own food too. Cats may also visit neighbours and be fed there, and sometimes in more than one local house!

What do cats like to eat versus what they should eat can sometimes differ. Cat owners will be familiar with their pet trying to steal some cheese off their plate, or even the food from another animal, but to avoid potential health or digestive problems it's best that they stick to ca recommended cat food as the foundation of their meals.

You may occasionally also give your cat titbits of trout, salmon, tuna or whitefish, as well as small amounts of rice, oatmeal and cooked egg. Remember though that these lack the nutritional content which your cat needs, so when considering which foods cats can eat, it's best to stick to wet or dry cat food, or specially designed cat treats, to be on the safe side.

What else can i give them

Your own pet may also have an allergy or intolerance to certain foods, so what human foods can cats eat and what they cannot can depend on the individual. It's important to observe them after introducing any new foods. Remember that fresh water should always be made available for your cat to access whenever they wish.

Nutrition, variety and balance

A well-formulated, complete cat food with a nutritionally-rich formula must be the foundation for your cat's diet. Like us, many cats enjoy variety, which is why giving a mix of wet foods and dry cat foods will help to boost their wellbeing as well as meet your cat's nutritional needs, which in turn can help support their natural defences. The moisture content within wet food is highly beneficial for the cat's hydration and urinary tract health, whilst the dry food diversifies the texture. Variation can also help if you have a picky eater. Supplements and the occasional treat can also be offered, which can be particularly useful when you're undertaking any cat training.

It's essential that cats keep active to maintain good health, agility and to keep them mentally and physically stimulated. Games, challenges, puzzle feeders and cat training can help to build your bond and keep your pet happy, and it's possible to use their food - or the odd treat - as a well-earned reward to increase their enjoyment of the activity.

Feeding kittens

If you're wondering what do cats eat when they're kittens, the best foods cats can eat after weaning - and under the age of 1 year - specially-formulated kitten food (Junior food) is best. When your cat is weaning it's advisable to offer them their mother's milk, or special kitten milk, to help boost their vitamin intake whilst introducing solid foods gradually from 4

to 6 weeks old. Kittens should remain with their mother until 12 weeks old, so they will be fully weaned by the time they come into your home.

Properly balanced nutrition is vital for a developing cat, and feeding them a high-quality food tailored to their age can help them to grow up healthy and strong. Remember that cow's milk is not advisable for cats of any age, as it's unhealthy for their digestive system and can cause vomiting or diarrhoea. When your kitten reaches adulthood, they should only be offered fresh water to drink.

Senior cats and picky eaters

A special food tailored to older cats' changing nutritional needs is usually recommended, from around 7 to 10 years old. Your cat may start to become less active, start to gain weight, or may lose weight or muscle mass as they get older, so what can cats eat and not eat may change. If your cat is losing weight or rapidly gaining, it's best to make an appointment with your vet as it could be caused by a medical condition. Cats can become more at-risk of age-related health conditions as they get older, such as arthritis, obesity and kidney or gut problems. Any changes in feeding or drinking behaviours should always be referred to a vet. If required, your vet can recommend a special prescription diet to help them stay in good health for longer.

Older cats and those with age-related health conditions may benefit from a senior cat food formula, but most cats enjoy a combination of wet food and dry food to help mix up their daily meals. Older cats may benefit from a senior diet with different ratios of fat, sodium, protein, carbohydrates and phosphorus, such as Perfect Fit™ Senior Cat Food - which is supplemented with taurine to help maintain a strong and healthy heart, plus high quality proteins and yeast, natural prebiotics to support digestion, and zinc to help support a healthy skin and coat.

Cats can become picky eaters as they get older, or they may be fussy from a young age. Switching cat food may help to pique their interest; try mixing a quarter of their new food with three-quarters of their old, and increase the ratios at each meal, to gradually transition the cat to its new food to help avoid any digestive upset from the change in diet. Mixing up meal times may help, or create fun games to encourage them to eat new things. Some cats like eating away from other people and pets, so try putting their food in a quiet place or where there aren't any strong smells. Some cats like their food warmed after it's been stored in the fridge, and others like different textures so experiment with a variety of wet and dry. Try to limit treats and reduce the amount of titbits you offer, and keep in mind what human foods can cats eat - and what they can't - to avoid illness.

Conclusion

A nutritionally-balanced, protein-rich complete cat food forms the basis of your cat's diet. Follow the feeding instructions on the label so that you don't overfeed or under-feed your pet. It can be fun trying out new textures and flavours to suit your pet's tastes, and most cats will love an interesting variety. If you're unsure how much they should eat, if they suddenly go off their food, or you're still wondering what can cats eat and not eat, speak to your vet. Read more about a cat's nutrition requirements, and how it changes over time, on our Perfect Fit blog.

FAQs

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1. **What cats should not eat?**

   If you’re wondering what can cats eat and not eat, there are several foods which must be avoided, as they can be harmful to your pet:

   - Dairy products - many cats are lactose intolerant and if they drink milk or eat yoghurt, cheese, cream or ice cream it may lead to cat digestive problems
   - Cooked bones or meat containing bones - these risk splintering and causing a choking hazard or intestinal obstruction
   - Bread
   - Nuts, peanut butter and other spreads
   - Avocado - due to its high fat content and the stone’s choking risk
   - Xylitol or sweeteners - these aren’t good for cats and can be toxic to dogs
   - Alcohol and caffeine - catnip is a safer substitute for your feline friend
   - Sweets, crisps and popcorn - highly processed foods containing salt and sugar are bad for any pet’s health.
2. **What human foods can cats eat?**

   Although it’s always best to choose cat-specific pet food, there are some foods you can share with your cat for the odd treat, such as a few vegetables - including peas, carrots or broccoli - as well as the occasional piece of cooked chicken, cooked turkey or other lean meats.

3. **What cats should eat?**
   There are many foods cats can eat, but not all of them will be good for them or support healthy development. Just like humans' temptations to eat foods that are not always the healthiest, may also affect our feline friends. However, all cats do need some foundational elements including; a high protein diet, fresh water, a balance of nutrients and the occasional treat or two to help keep them happy.
4. **What do cats like and what should they eat?**

   Some cats can be adventurous eaters after they’ve been weaned, and can transition fairly quickly from moistened dry food to a specially-formulated kitten food from around four to six weeks old, which helps to support their growth and development.

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