

How Much Food Should I Feed My Kitten?



Article checked by a vet

If you’ve recently brought home a new feline friend, or your cat has just given birth, you may be wondering how much food should I feed my kitten when it comes to weaning them in just a few weeks time! In the first few weeks and months of their lives, kittens are growing rapidly. You should feed your kitten food that has been specially formulated to be complete and balanced to meet their nutritional requirements, served in small, regular meals throughout the day. In this kitten feeding guide, we discuss when kittens start eating, what they should eat, and how many times a day you should feed a kitten at every age and stage.

Kittens up to 12 weeks need around four to five smaller, regular meals after weaning. Between three and six months old they may transition to three meals a day, moving to two

to three meals a day by one year of age. In this article, we'll also cover:

Each kitten is different. Depending on their breed, their weight and size will vary, and therefore the amount they eat will be marginally different. As kittens grow very quickly, you should feed your kitten food that is tailored to deliver all the nutrients they need for healthy growth in each meal.

You can work out how much to feed a kitten by following the instructions on the back of your kitten food and adjusting accordingly for your kitten.

If your kitten is underweight, they may require more calories daily, in which case you could increase the number of meals offered throughout the day, so your kitten's tiny stomach can consume little and often. If your kitten is overweight, you may need to reduce their daily calorie intake by slightly reducing the amount offered at each meal.

Key considerations for kitten feeding

If you're wondering: how much food should I feed my kitten? We've compiled a handy kitten feeding guide to help you. However, exact amounts will vary for your pet. Every kitten is an individual, and some will eat more than others depending on their size, breed and activity levels. Larger breeds, like Maine Coons, may require more calories than a Siamese, and highly active kittens will have higher energy demands.

Age	Weight	Dry Food	Wet Food	Mixed Feeding	Daily Calorie Target (kcal)
Up to 3 months	0.5–1.7 kg	55 g	1.5 pouch	20 g dry food + 0.5 pouch	225–250
4–5 months	1.8–2.7 kg	60 g	2 pouches	20 g dry food + 2 pouches	250–330
6–12 months	3–4.5 kg	70 g	2 pouches	30 g dry food + 2 pouches	330–580

You or your vet can calculate how much you should feed your kitten, based on the exact caloric amount your kitten requires, using the Body Condition Score. To help them maintain a healthy weight, you should be able to feel their ribs without a thick layer of fat around them.

How often should you feed a kitten?

Your kitten's feeding schedule depends on their exact age, and how often you should feed a

kitten will change as they grow. From when they're newborn until 7 weeks, kittens drink their mother's milk and nurse on demand. If their mother isn't able to feed them, you should offer cat milk substitute formula in a small bottle around 8 times a day.

At around 4 weeks old, kittens start weaning. To help them move from liquid to solid food, the Gruel Method is recommended, which involves mixing dry kitten kibble with warm water (not cow's milk) to create a porridge-like consistency which they can lap up and digest more easily. This can be introduced slowly alongside their milk, beginning with one meal a day, and increasing the frequency as they start to drop milk feeds.

By 3 months, you can offer 4-5 meals across one day as a kitten feeding guide. Between 4-6 months, your kitten should eat a minimum of 3 meals per day. As they get closer to 1 year, you should feed your kitten a minimum of two meals per day. Your kitten may prefer smaller, more regular meals, and can eat up to 6 times a day; you can discuss what's best for your cat with your vet.

Tracking growth and daily weight gain

A growing kitten should ideally gain around 10g to 20g of weight every day. How many times to feed a kitten, and the amount you give them, may need to be adjusted to help them maintain a healthy weight. It's recommended to weigh your kitten weekly using your kitchen scales to ensure they're within the ideal range for a healthy feline. It can help to use a plastic bowl or container to keep them safely in place as you weigh them.

Free-feeding vs. Meal-feeding: Which is best?

There are two main feeding schedules for how many times a day you should feed a kitten: free-feeding and meal-feeding. As a pet parent, it is up to you which you choose, although there are advantages and disadvantages of both to consider. It's also important to check with your vet which kitten feeding schedule is suitable for your kitten, depending on their weight and nutritional needs.

Free feeding kittens

Free-feeding is when you leave food in your cat's bowl so it's available for your kitten to graze on throughout the day. This can only be done with dry food, as wet food will go off if left out for too long.

The benefits of free-feeding means your kitten can choose when to eat and learn self-regulation on how much they need to satisfy their hunger. This is also easier for owners who are busy with work and aren't able to implement a feeding schedule for their kitten. However, if kittens aren't able to self-regulate their food intake, there are health risks if

they are overeating and becoming overweight.

It’s also difficult to free-feed if your home has multiple cats, especially older cats. Your older cat may try to eat your kitten’s food and exert dominance over them, leading to your kitten not eating enough and perhaps not feeling safe at home. If you choose to free-feed in a multiple-cat household, you can use a microchip-activated feeder which you can set up with your kitten’s microchip, so the dry food only dispenses for them.

Meal feeding kittens

Meal-feeding has more of a structure, and usually cats thrive off routine. It also works better if you are offering wet food. You can create a feeding schedule for your kitten by serving meals at specific times, such as morning, afternoon and evening. This will also help your cat become adjusted to expecting food at that time, stimulating their appetite enough to finish their meals. It’s also helpful if you’re wondering how much food should I feed my kitten, so you can keep track of how much they’re eating if you have other cats around too.

However, kittens require more meals per day than adult cats, so you need to make sure you’re able to serve as much food as they need. This method requires more time and structure for owners to follow, which can be difficult if you are working long hours.

The best feeding schedule for kittens is usually a combination of free-feeding and meal-feeding. You could leave dry food out for the day, whilst still offering wet food at mealtimes, to ensure your kitten doesn’t get hungry. We discuss more on the benefits of mixed feeding later.

There are also various cat feeding toys you can purchase, which make fun ways to play with your furry friend. These dispense dry kibble as your kitten plays around with it on the floor. Since hunting is instinctive in a cat’s nature, this is a great way to make mealtimes more exciting for your kitten, ensuring mental stimulation and physical exercise at the same time!

Whichever method you choose, the most important thing is that your cat is eating well. By observing them eating their meals, you’ll soon notice anything unusual, which helps with understanding your feline's non verbal signals and behaviours. If your kitten is not eating, it’s important you take them to the vet immediately. Cats should not go longer than 24 hours without eating as they can get very sick, very quickly. This is especially dangerous for kittens who are more vulnerable. Usually, loss of appetite is a sign of illness or discomfort, which is why it’s essential to take your kitten to the vet.

What exactly should I feed my kitten?

So you know how often and how much to feed your kitten - now you're wondering, what exactly should I feed my kitten? It's essential you purchase high-quality food specific to kittens, as it contains the necessary nutrients for them to grow healthily. PERFECT FIT™ Kitten Junior<1 Complete Dry Cat Food has been approved by experienced vets at Waltham Petcare Science Institute, ensuring a healthy, balanced diet for your growing kitten.

When choosing kitten food, it's essential to look out for high protein, calcium and fatty acid content. Protein is essential for a kitten's developing body, as well as their playful energy, whilst calcium provides support to your kitten's bones and teeth. DHA is the fatty acid to look out for, as it supports your cat's nervous system, as well as the development of their brain and vision. Your kitten requires a lot of calories compared to adult cats, which is why kitten food is the best option.

You can also speak to your vet to see what is best for your kitten. Before we dive into the benefits of wet and dry food, let's understand what's going on in your kitten's mouth.

Like human babies, kittens are born without teeth. At just 3 weeks old, your kitten's milk teeth will start erupting through their gums. Then, at 12 -14 weeks old, these milk teeth will begin to fall out as they are replaced by the adult teeth. Kittens will have a full set of adult teeth by the time they are 6-7 months old.

This is part of why wet kitten food is usually easier for kittens to eat, and ensures they stay hydrated due to its high-moisture content. However, kittens can eat dry food from 3 weeks old, especially if you make it softer by mixing it with warm water, which also warms the food slightly and helps bring out its aromas (and your kitten's appetite!). Dry kitten food is easier to feed, doesn't go off if left out, and has great dental benefits for kittens, such as removing plaque.

Mixed feeding is when you offer a combination of both wet and dry food. By serving both types of food to your kitten, you're expanding their palate and encouraging them to try different flavours and textures. This helps as your cat gets older, as they are less likely to be fussy eaters and will be more accepting of new foods. Kittens who only eat one type of food often become fussy eaters as adults, which can affect their nutrition. If you're wondering: what do cats eat as they grow? We've created a cat feeding guide to help you. You can also explore the full PERFECT FIT™ Kitten Junior <1 range to support your kitten's Total 5 health needs.

Foods to avoid: What you shouldn't feed your kitten

Certain human foods can be toxic to cats. Cow’s milk and cream cause diarrhoea in most kittens, as cats are lactose-intolerant. Below is a list of some foods you can and cannot offer, to protect your kitten.

Can eat:

- Plain cooked fish - such as tuna, mackerel, salmon
- Plain cooked chicken - skin and bones removed
- Plain cooked meat - beef, turkey, lamb

Cannot eat:

- Raw eggs, chicken or meat
- Onions and garlic
- Cow’s milk or cream
- Grapes and raisins
- Dog food - incomplete nutrients
- Chocolate
- Caffeine or alcohol

If your kitten accidentally eats any of the above, contact your vet for advice immediately.

When kittens are born, they nurse from their mother until 8 weeks old, when the mother’s milk begins to dry up. However, from 2 weeks old kitten’s baby teeth begin to appear, and by 3-4 weeks your kitten can start eating solid foods.

You can learn more about the development of kittens into cats and their changing needs. PERFECT FIT™ Adult Chicken Dry is an excellent food for kittens to transition to once they become fully grown cats, and you can learn how to switch cat food safely and successfully. Continuing mixed feeding for adult cats is also beneficial, as it helps promote good health and vitality by enjoying a variety of flavours and nutrient sources.

Whilst nutrition is a huge part of a kitten’s development, it’s important you also support their needs around play, hunting and sleep. Find out how much sleep your kitten needs to understand their sleeping habits. Spoiler alert: kittens sleep a lot.

How much to feed a kitten - FAQs

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1. **How much to feed your kitten?**

   A general kitten feeding guide between 1-5 months is ½ cup of food per each kg of their body weight. For kittens between 6-12 months, this can be ¼ cup per each kg of their body weight. How many times a day you should feed a kitten will also depend on their age, starting with 4 small meals up to 16 weeks old, dropping to 2-3 meals by 1 year old.

2. **Can you overfeed kittens?**

   Kittens are growing rapidly in the first few months of their life and require a tremendous amount of nutrients for healthy development. However, since their stomachs are still small, you should feed your kitten small meals regularly so they can process it easily. Younger kittens need small, regular meals, and their portion size plus how often you should feed a kitten will change as they grow.

3. **Should kittens eat wet food or dry food?**

   Once a kitten has weaned from their mother's milk, they are ready to experiment with solid foods. You can serve either wet or dry kitten food, or a combination of both which is known as mixed feeding.

4. **When can kittens eat dry food?**

   Kittens can eat dry food between 4-6 weeks old, as they likely have most of their baby teeth. It's best to soften dry food with warm water at this age, to make it easier for them to eat whilst their teeth are still delicate.

5. **What is the 3-3-3 rule for kittens?**

   The 3-3-3 rule is a guide for your new kitten to settle in. The first three days usually involve them hiding and not eating much, which can be confusing when you may be worrying how many times to feed a kitten. However, after three weeks they'll be feeling comfortable and be eating normally. By three months they'll feel fully at home and will start forming strong bonds with the family.

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MIXED-FEEDING FOR KITTENS: THE KITTEN DIET TO LAST A LIFETIME

THE ART OF MIXING WET AND DRY KITTEN FOODYour kitten’s first year is the perfect time to lay the foundation for the healthy diet she’ll always enjoy. This usually comes in the form of “mixed-feeding”, which means giving your cat a combination of wet and dry food. Not only does it provide your growing kitten with the nutritional balance she needs throughout her life, but it also encourages her to explore different foods, helping her become a less fussy cat.KITTEN MIXED-FEEDING: “DIVERSITY RIGHT FROM THE START”As you may already be aware, your kitten's dietary preferences are first influenced by her mother's nutritional routine, and, again, later influenced by the nutritional routine you establish during her first year. With this in mind, it is highly beneficial to your kitten if you expose her to a variety of foods as early in life as possible in order to broaden her dietary preferences from an early age. This is especially relevant when it comes to mixing wet and dry foods as it allows your cat to take full advantage of the ‘urinary’ and ‘weight control’ benefits of wet foods at a time when she most needs them - following sterilisation. Mixed feeding means that ideally, 1/3 of calories should come from dry and 2/3 of calories should come from wet food.It is recommended that, between the ages of 2 and 3 months, you present your kitten with a variety of different foods, wet first, then dry (in the appropriate kibble size!), all whilst respecting adequate diet transition periods for new recipes. Through providing this diverse experience so early on, upon reaching adulthood your cat will more readily accept a variety of foods and reduce her tendency to reject new foods. In a nutshell, your cat will be less fussy!A word from the Dr Corinne Lesaine, Perfect Fit’s consulting veterinarian - “While kittens usually prefer novelty in food, and enjoy the process of discovering smells, flavours and textures, it has been observed that in stressful situations they often revert to more familiar ‘comforting’ foods and refuse new foods. It is therefore beneficial to create a positive environment for your kitten, so she can vary her eating experiences and not develop into a fussy eater!”YOUR KITTEN’S WELLBEING GOES WELL BEYOND HER STOMACHPerfect Fit™ has been developed based on WALTHAM® Centre’s nutritional expertise. These products consider the evolution of your cat’s modern lifestyle and her current needs. However, we believe that your kitten’s wellbeing goes well beyond her stomach. Healthy nutrition is ‘a must’, and we believe physical exercise and playful interaction are just as important to her wellbeing in order to help provide her with the best quality of life, one that she can enjoy from her very first year.

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