

CAN CATS EAT RAW CHICKEN?



Article checked by a vet

The same food health hazards as to why humans wouldn’t eat raw chicken also apply to cats, including the risk of becoming infected with Salmonella, Clostridium and Campylobacter bacteria.

On the other hand, feeding cooked chicken to a cat as a tasty treat is absolutely fine. But cat parents will still need to take some safety precautions when giving chicken to cats. In this article, we discuss if raw chicken is good for cats, the associated risks and how to properly prepare chicken for cats. We also look at other meats and alternatives to chicken, and what to do if your cat does eat raw chicken.

Therefore, meat is not only a recommended part of their diet, but a dominant and essential one. Meat contains important nutrients that help maintain your cat’s health. We’ve listed the several key components of meat/chicken below:

Protein

Cats need protein for bone formation, muscle development and tissue repair. Protein also contributes to the overall growth of cats, which is why cooked chicken is good for cats, as it is high in protein - hence why it is a commonly used ingredient in pet food.

Fats

The fats in chicken also make it an excellent source of energy. Fats also improve the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins, and contain linoleic acid, which promotes healthy skin and shiny coats in cats.

Amino Acids

As these are the building blocks of protein, they're essential for normal bodily functions in cats. Some amino acids can't be synthesised unless part of their diet, which is why cooked chicken is so beneficial as it contains plenty. Here are some of the main amino acids:

Arginine

Arginine is important for biological functions in cats, including metabolic processes as well as detoxification of ammonia.

Leucine

Leucine helps the synthesis of proteins, and is also important for muscle repair.

Lysine

Lysine supports immune function, hormone synthesis and enzyme production.

Vitamin D

While humans can synthesise vitamin D from sunlight, cats can't which is why they need it in their diet. Vitamin D helps calcium absorption which is also crucial for their bone health.

Iron

Iron forms haemoglobin which carries oxygen in the blood and prevents anaemia. Cats need plenty of iron, and cooked chicken is a good source for it.

What are the risks

There are many risks to giving cats raw chicken, as well as other raw meats. This is why it's essential that cat parents buy quality meat, prepare and store it properly, and cook it thoroughly. Raw chicken can be a health hazard for both the human preparing the chicken, as well as the cat if it was to eat it raw. There are negative implications of raw chicken, including the risks of salmonella, campylobacter and other bacteria which are often found in raw chicken. These bacteria are all killed during the cooking process, making cooked chicken safe to handle and eat.

If you're wondering whether you can feed your cat chicken bones, this is an absolute no.

Both raw and cooked chicken bones are not safe for cats, as they can splinter and cause pain or bleeding as they pass through the cat, as well as the risk of the possibility of choking on bones and the nutritional limitations of chicken. We provide more detail on the health hazards associated with raw chicken below:

Parasites and bacteria

Raw chicken can contain many different bacteria, including E.coli, Salmonella(open in new tab) and Listeria, which is not only dangerous for humans handling it, but also cats eating it. It's important to practise careful hygiene and handling when preparing raw chicken, including washing your hands thoroughly and cleaning surfaces properly.

Bones and digestion risks

Cats absolutely cannot eat chicken bones. Bones or cartilage from raw or cooked chicken can be a choking hazard, causing internal blockages in the digestive tract and injuries to the mouth. If you are serving your cat cooked chicken, always remove the bones.

Nutritional limitations

As we've discussed, cooked chicken can be good for cats. However, it should not make up the entirety of your cat's diet. Chicken alone will not provide all of the essential vitamins and minerals your cat needs, in the correct amounts and ratios, and will lead to nutritional deficiencies. Cat parents should consider the nutritional limitations of chicken and instead provide a complete and balanced diet, whilst using cooked chicken as an occasional treat.

Cats also enjoy cooked chicken skin, but as it is high in fat, it's best to only give a small piece as a treat every now and then.

While humans enjoy flavoursome chicken with seasoning and sauces, it's important to only give plainly-cooked chicken to cats. This is because certain ingredients are toxic to cats, such as garlic and onions, and should be avoided entirely. Boiled chicken is the best option for cats as it is lower in fats and the boiling process ensures that any additional salts or seasonings are cleaned from the meat before eating.

If you are feeding cooked chicken to a cat, make sure it is fresh from the refrigerator and never left out of the fridge, uncovered or only partially heated. Thoroughly cooking chicken helps prevent harmful bacteria from growing and making your cat sick.

In recent years, raw food diets have gained popularity across social media. However, while it may look appealing, cat parents should note that these diets are not only expensive and time-consuming to prepare, but are also a risk to human and animal health. This might not be suitable for some households and lifestyles. It's better to provide cats with a complete and balanced diet that contains all the essential nutrients in the correct amounts and ratios.

By providing a nutritionally formulated diet, cats can eat cooked eggs, meat, chicken and other items as an occasional treat, to gain their benefits while staying in good health overall.

Can cats eat other raw meats?

Cats can eat cooked meats or fish as a viable snack, but here are some points to consider:

- Any meat or fish served to your cat should be cooked, plain, boneless and not smoked or cured as this can upset their digestive system.
- Cats can eat chicken liver and other organs, which are usually discarded, provided they are fully cooked. These meats are rich in vitamins and minerals, and highly palatable to the cat.
- Cat owners should not give any raw meat to kittens as they are still developing and their digestive system may be more sensitive, as well as being more susceptible to illness. Find out how much to feed a kitten.

What else can I feed my cat for a treat?

Cat parents should maintain the foundation of any cat's diet by providing complete and balanced cat food, tailored to the lifestage and lifestyle of their cat. Whilst we absolutely advise against giving raw chicken to cats in favour of cooked chicken, there are many alternatives beyond their regular meals where the occasional treat can be added for variety or to reward behaviour. Consider items like cooked meats, fish and eggs for extra nutrition. Cats can also eat chicken liver, provided it is thoroughly cooked, as it is high in nutrients.

However, you should avoid items containing lactose, such as milk, cheese and cream, as cats are usually lactose intolerant.

What to do if your cat steals or finds some raw meat

Cats are curious creatures, and combined with their agility, your cat might be quick to try some raw meat while you're prepping in the kitchen. In most situations, although it's not desirable behaviour, the action is usually without incident. However, if you are concerned your cat has tried to lick or bite raw meat, keep a close eye on them for signs of discomfort, vomiting or diarrhoea and learn more about digestive problems. If these symptoms occur, it's advisable to take them to the veterinarian for a health check.

On the other hand, if your cat has found meat that is rotten, they will usually be wary enough to not eat it. If they do ingest it, there is a high risk of salmonella, as well as other bacteria, and possibility of bones. In these cases, you should take your cat to the veterinarian immediately for emergency action.

It's also worth noting that a cat eating rotten meat is usually against their survival instincts. Cats will only do this if they're unwell or hungry, and in any case should be taken to the veterinarian. Your vet may suggest that you change their food or eating habits to make it more fulfilling and substantial.

Often, cats enjoy eating wet food in the morning and evening, whilst having a bowl of dry food to graze on throughout the day. You could even put dry food in a puzzle feeder or hide it around the home for additional mental stimulation.

It's crucial that cat parents provide high-quality cat food as a foundation for nutritional completeness - such as Perfect Fit. This will ensure your cat is receiving all the nutrition they need to grow, develop and thrive, whilst also enjoying a healthy occasional treat. Check out Perfect Fit's range of options and find what your cat enjoys best.

FAQs

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1. **Can cats eat raw chicken?**

   A common question that cat parents might wonder at some point is ‘can cats eat raw chicken?’, and it can be a controversial topic. However, the answer to whether you can give cats raw chicken is no, you cannot safely feed cats raw chicken.

2. **Is raw chicken good for cats?**

   Raw chicken or meat is not advised for cats, but cooked meat is a good supplement for a cat’s diet for numerous reasons. Since cats are obligate carnivores, they need to consume Taurine (an amino acid found in meat) in their daily diet in order to survive.

3. **What is the best way to prepare chicken for cats?**

   In terms of how to prepare chicken, roasted or boiled chicken is good for cats. Chicken should always be served without bones, in which case breast is best, or else drumsticks and thighs with the bones removed entirely.

4. **Can you give cats raw chicken?**

   Returning to the question ‘can you give cats raw chicken?’, the answer is no, cats can’t eat raw chicken. If you want to add variation to your cat’s diet, consider offering both wet and dry food. There are many benefits of mixed feeding, as the moisture in wet food can help maintain your cat’s urinary tract health, while dry food can provide a change in texture.

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