

HOW CAN THE RIGHT NUTRITION SUPPORT YOUR CAT’S NATURAL DEFENCES

Your cat’s natural defences were starting to develop early in the womb. They are important to her - as a kitten, an adult and an older cat - as they help keep her healthy, vibrant, and able to enjoy all that life can bring.

While the development of her defences is a perfectly natural process, there are ways you can help promote this development through nutrition. Support for your cat’s natural defences is now a major component of any high-quality cat food. Here we’ll look at some of the nutrients that can help your cat’s natural defences stay strong and robust.

WHAT ARE YOUR CAT’S NATURAL DEFENCES?

Your cat’s natural defences are a complex system that protect her against foreign elements like bacteria and viruses. It helps keep her strong and healthy as she goes out into the world (and even when she just cuddles up on the sofa!).

A kitten initially receives support for her immune system directly from her mother. The development of her defences then occur over time. Supporting this development while she is young is crucial as it can have a great influence on her health for the rest of her life.

NUTRIENTS ARE THE KEY TO SUPPORTING NATURAL

DEFENCES

One of the best ways to support the development of her natural defences is through nutrients contained in her diet. Nutrients are substances that provide the nourishment that is essential for growth and the maintenance of life.

Of the nutrients beneficial to cats, scientific research has shown that food enriched with antioxidants can support a cat’s natural defences (National Research Council, 2006; Koelsch & Smith, 2001).

Antioxidants are vitamins, minerals and micronutrients found naturally in the food that contribute to the protection of cell damage caused by free radicals. Free radicals are produced by cells during the normal functioning of the body, but can also be due to external factors like pollution, a smoking environment or UV radiation. When quantities of free radicals are too high they can weaken DNA, lipids and cell proteins.

Vitamin E, vitamin C and taurine are examples of naturally occurring antioxidants that can be found in a complete and balanced cat food.

These antioxidants are particularly important when your cat is young and perhaps facing the outside world for the first time. Other times they can be important are in times of stress or exposure to change, when the immune system has been under pressure by illness or disease, or to support your cat as she is getting older.

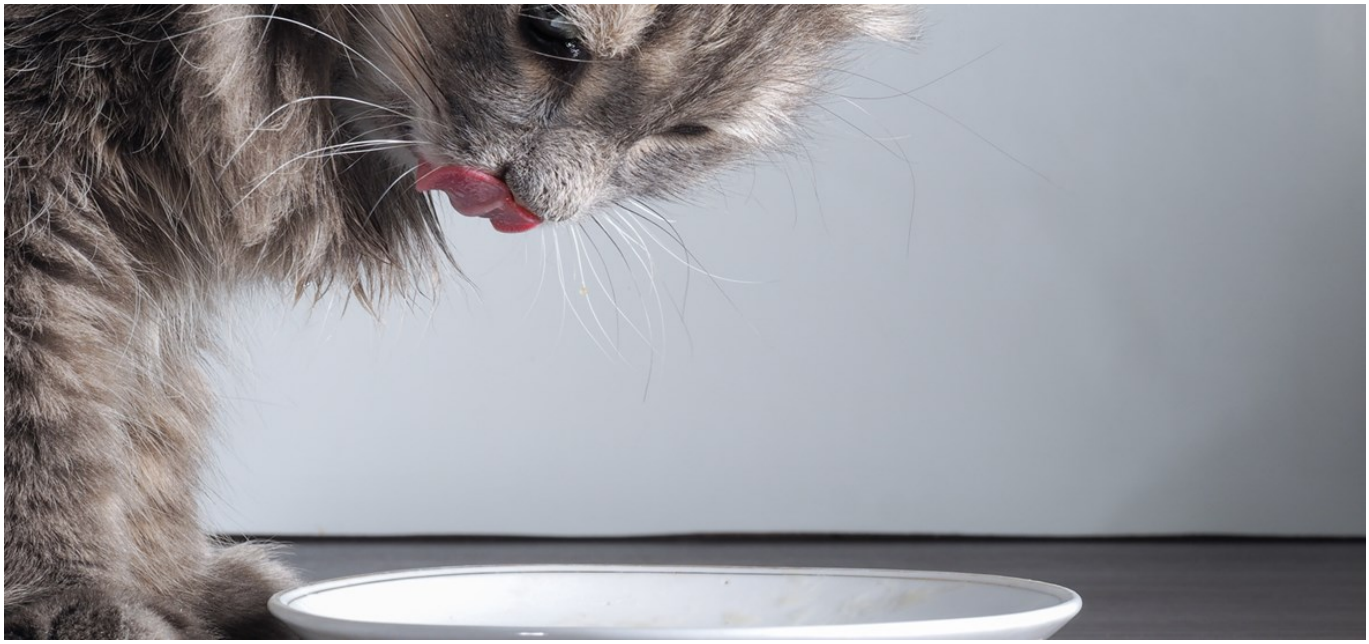
A HEALTHY SKIN AND COAT: HER FIRST NATURAL BARRIER

If antioxidants are especially important for your cat's physical health, a healthy skin and coat is also a major contributor to her natural defence. It is her first natural barrier against the outside world.

Promoting a healthy skin and coat is particularly important as they are both in a state of constant renewal. It’s also important during periods of moulting, or immune fragility for example.

All of these factors rely a great deal on the available nutrients in your cat’s diet. Making the right food choice for your cat is therefore of paramount importance; it will help her continue to have both a healthy skin and coat, and strong natural defences.

Research has shown that a diet containing Omega-6 fatty acids, zinc and biotin can all help to support a healthy skin and coat, so keep this in mind when choosing a food for your cat.



BEYOND FOOD: OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

Your cat's natural defences are also affected by her lifestyle and her normal physiological actions.

For example, periods of sleep and rest allow for cell repair and regeneration. Physical exercise has been shown to have a positive effect on natural defences too. This can be as simple as spending time playing with your cat. One way this occurs is through the increased blood circulation physical activity brings. It increases the amount of oxygen sent to cells, helping in the repair and regeneration process. It's a great way to deepen your bond while giving her immune system a boost. So get playing!

Making sure your cat always has access to fresh, clean water goes a long way to supporting her natural defences too. The cells in her body are made of more than 70% water, and staying hydrated enables her entire system to function properly. Apart from promoting cell growth and repair, water helps regulate her body temperature, it delivers oxygen throughout the body via the blood system, and enables the brain to function. Feeding your cat wet food is also a good way of helping her stay hydrated and supporting the proper functioning of her entire system.

A HEALTHY CAT IS A HAPPY CAT

Having healthy natural defences helps your cat to stay vibrant and energetic. They help her as she moves through life and transitions into new environments and different life-stages.

Feeding your cat a high-quality food that is complete, balanced and tailored to her life-stage can help to support natural defences while also providing her with all of her other nutritional requirements.

Visit our product page to get more information on cat diets that support natural defences and that are tailored to different life-stages.

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