

# **Q: What veterinary care does my cat need?**

**A: It is very important to have yearly check-ups for your cat to assess your cat's overall health and weight.**

Cats need regular veterinary care. Cats are good at hiding illnesses in part because often cats just sleep both when healthy or sick. It is very important to have yearly check-ups for your cat to assess your cat's overall health and weight.

A physical exam allows the veterinarian to look at your cat from head to tail to try to determine if there are any health problems. Your cat can also have a weight check. Monitoring your cat's weight once or twice a year can also help to detect health changes that need to be addressed.

New cats to your home should have a fecal sample checked for intestinal parasites. The physical exam can determine if your new cat has any external parasites, such as fleas, ticks, or ear mites. A new cat should also be checked for exposure to Feline Leukemia or Feline Immunodeficiency Virus via a blood test done in the office. This test is important if there are other cats in your home so that the new cat doesn't bring infectious problems into the home.



## **What problems can cats have that need veterinary care?**

**Urinary tract problems.** Urinary tract problems can happen at any point in your cat's life. Potential problems include infections, inflammation and kidney damage which can lead to kidney failure. Discussing your cat's drinking and urination habits can help the veterinarian decide if further testing should be completed.





**Dental problems.** Cats can develop lesions on their teeth which are slightly similar to cavities; these lesions can cause pain and, in some instances, difficulty eating. The veterinarian can do an oral exam to look for these lesions or for other signs of tartar, gingivitis and periodontal disease. Severe gingivitis can lead to bacterial spread from the mouth into the blood stream where it can harm the liver and kidney function and lead to organ failure. If your cat has dental disease, the veterinarian can discuss with you your options for your cat's dental care.

**Behavior problems.** Often behavior problems with cats involve the mis-use of the cat box. The first thing a veterinarian needs to do for a cat mis-using the cat box, is perform a good physical exam, hear the history of the problem and collect a urine sample. A medical problem will need to be ruled out before any behavioral issues can be addressed.

**As your cat ages,** there is an increased chance of kidney failure, diabetes mellitus or an over-active thyroid problem developing. In order to diagnose these problems, your veterinarian would need to run bloodwork which will look at a CBC (complete blood count), chemistry profile, and thyroid test. These tests should be done yearly starting when your cat is about 8 years old, along with the yearly physical and weight check.

**Vaccines.** Indoor cats need vaccinations to protect them from 'feline distemper' and rabies. 'Feline distemper' vaccine refers to a combination vaccination for Panleukopenia virus (a respiratory and gastrointestinal disease), Calici virus and Rhinotracheitis virus (both respiratory viruses). Humans can carry disease in on their shoes and clothing. Vaccines can protect cats from these diseases. Pennsylvania law requires indoor cats to maintain a current rabies vaccine. Any cat who spends time outdoors is at increased risk of being exposed to the above viruses as well as Feline Leukemia Virus; there is a vaccine available for cats who spend time outdoors to protect them.

**Cats should begin having bloodwork run annually when about 8 years old to check for kidney failure, diabetes mellitus, and over-active thyroid.**

