

KITTEN'S FIRST YEAR

At Northpoint Veterinary Hospital we recommend the following visit schedule for your kitten's first year.

8 Weeks

- First vaccine! FVRCP (Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis, Calicivirus, Panleukemia, and Chlamydiosis) • Stool sample
- Possible deworming and Flea/Tick Prevention

12 Weeks

- Booster of the 1st vaccine- FVRCP and first Feline Leukemia vaccine
- Stool sample
- Possible deworming

16 Weeks

- Final FVRCP booster and Feline Leukemia Booster & Rabies Vaccine
- Possible deworming

6-8 Months

- Spay/Neuter



INTESTINAL PARASITES

Parasite infection in dogs and cats, particularly in puppies and kittens is extremely common. Worms can be passed through the mother's placenta to infect the puppies and kittens in the uterus before they are even born, and can be passed through the mother's milk after they are born. Microscopic worm eggs can also be easily passed to both young and older pets when sniffing the ground, sniffing other animals, or chewing on their own fur.

Can worms pass to people?

Absolutely yes! Many common pet parasites are zoonotic, which means they can pass to people in a variety of stages. Symptoms in people can range from no obvious symptoms, to skin irritations, diarrhea, internal cysts, and even blindness. This is why it is extremely important to the entire family that our pets' intestinal parasites are dealt with effectively.

Deworming plan for puppies and kittens

Puppies and kittens are routinely dewormed every 2 weeks until 3 months of age, and usually again at 4 months. Various stages in the life cycle of the parasite can cycle through your pet for several months when they are young, so it is important to follow through with these treatments. These guidelines are set by the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO) for the safety of your pets and the people in your household.

Why check stool samples?

Stool samples can often reveal the presence of intestinal parasites before the animal becomes symptomatic. There are, however, times during the parasites life cycle that eggs are not being released. For this reason, other factors (such as pet's age and exposure to other animals) are taken into consideration when planning deworming treatments. Stool samples are also invaluable in assessing the success of previous deworming treatments to confirmed parasite cases. Regular stool checks should be taken in puppies and kittens, and should be continued annually with adult dogs and cats.

How to keep your family safe and prevent re-infection

- Have a fresh stool sample examined microscopically at least yearly
- Follow all deworming protocol according to directions and be sure to provide a follow-up fecal sample •

Clean up stools immediately

- Wash hands after handling puppies and kittens and discourage face licking
- Encourage children to wash hands before eating

- Pregnant women should avoid cleaning/changing litter boxes

Grooming Your Kitten

Giving your kitten a bath while she is young will help her feel more comfortable with baths in the future. Although cats usually groom themselves, sometimes (depending on how long their hair is) they will need a bath occasionally. Getting your kitten used to baths now will make the experience easier for it in the future.

Be sure to use shampoos and conditioners specifically made for kittens. Be sure to protect your kitten's ears from getting water in them. You will also want to be careful not to get soap in its eyes.

Depending on when you choose to bath your kitten, be sure to introduce the water slowly. The kitchen sink works well with kittens and with adult cats if they are not too big. Turn the water on gently, opposite from the side of the sink where the kitten is sitting. This will allow your kitten to get used to the sound of the water.

While slowly running the water out of the faucet, put a handful of water over your kitten's back to give her a chance to experience the feel of the water on her coat. If she squirms or tries to run away, stop putting water on her but keep the water running on the other side of the sink. Do some touches on her face with your index finger or middle finger. Start on his/her forehead and do tiny circles, moving the skin around one and a quarter times in one spot. Work your way down to the top of your kitten's nose and just do a few slow circular touches until your kitten calms down.

This will calm down most cats. Once she has calmed down, again try putting a handful of water on her back. Repeat this a few times until he/she becomes comfortable and is not struggling to get away. If after a few tries he/she is still fighting you, do a few more touches on the forehead, put your kitten in a towel and gently rub him/her for a minute or so, and put your kitten on the floor. For today, bath time is over. Practice this a few days in a row until your kitten becomes comfortable with the water on his/her back.

It is very important that you, rather than the kitten, decide when it leaves. If you let him/her go when he/she wants to, he/she will train you to do things his/her way. This is an opportunity to let her know you are here to understand and help her, but events will happen when you say they will, and not when she demands.

If the kitten is comfortable with the handful of water on her back, then you can move the nozzle from the sink over to her and let it run on her coat gently. Let her get used to the feel of the water. Once she is willing to hold still for a few seconds, you can begin her bath.

For the first actual bath, do not use much soap. The first bath is more of an opportunity for her to get comfortable with being bathed. The following day you can give her a real bath, but do not do too much too quickly. You want her to get used to baths so she will not fight you in the future.

Why Should I Spay/Neuter My Cat?

Spaying & neutering your pets is a responsible way of helping to eliminate pet over-population. Shelters & rescue groups are full to capacity of animals that are in need of homes. Many people think they don't have to worry about spaying/neutering as long as their pets are kept indoors, but this is simply not the case. A female cat in heat, or a male looking for a mate can be extremely difficult to prevent from escaping & owners often find themselves dealing with more than they bargained for!

Male cats that are neutered are **less likely to roam, spray urine to mark their territory, & fight with other cats.**

Spayed female cats tend to make more attentive companions, because all their energy isn't constantly directed towards finding a mate. Keep in mind that **female cats can come in & out of heat regularly until they become pregnant**, especially if there is a male cat in the vicinity. Medically, **spaying your cat can protect her from some cancers, infections, & sexually transmitted diseases.**

At Northpoint Veterinary Hospital we recommend spaying/neutering all pets for the health and happiness of you & your pets.

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Why Are Canned Diets Good For My Cat?

- Cats are poor water drinkers by nature, resulting in highly concentrated urine
- **Canned food has a much higher water content that will help to dilute the urine** • Concentrated urine is more irritating to the bladder wall, which can contribute to chronic blood in the urine, signs of irritation (frequent urination, straining, crying, and inappropriate urination.) • Concentrated urine also increases the likelihood that the crystals will form in the urine, leading to bladder & kidney stones.
- As cats age, they may eventually develop kidney disease & require more water in their diets to flush out toxins & prevent dehydration.
- Excessive carbohydrate consumption in dry diets can lead to obesity & diabetes
- We recommend a diet consisting of at least 50% high quality canned food such as Royal Canin development for kittens, or preventive canned food for adult cats.

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Introducing Your Kitten to Your Home

When you first bring your kitten home, you need to take steps to make the adjustment easier on both you and your kitten. A new place is scary for your kitten, so remember to take each step slowly and work at your kitten's pace. Whether your home houses other animals or not, you should introduce your kitten to one room at first, then add another, and so on. The same holds true for new people and objects. Introducing a kitten to new environments and people is a process that should be done gradually.

When bringing your kitten into your home for the first time, she should be in a carrying case. Before you bring her into her room, you should kitten-proof it; do not leave small objects lying around. Cats are very curious animals, and if there are small objects around for the kitten to play with or chew on, in many cases she will. Anything that is in the room that dangles or hangs should also be adjusted so the kitten cannot reach it. In addition, set the room up with a litter box, food, water, and one or two toys to investigate. Bring her into the room while still in her carrier. For now, the door to the carrier should remain closed for about half an hour. At this point, you simply leave your kitten alone. Any family member who wants to stay with her can, but they must speak softly to the kitten and sit still.

In about a half hour, you should check on your kitten. If she is meowing or near the front of the carrier asking to be let out, you can do so in this one room. Make sure someone sits with her quietly and gives her the time and space she needs to be comfortable with her new surroundings. Open the door to the carrier and let her come out on her own. Keep an eye on her but do not interact with her unless she initiates it by coming over to you. Make sure you keep the door to the room shut; once she decides to come out of the carrier, she may enjoy exploring her new environment or try to hide somewhere you cannot reach her.

Over the next few days, leave the kitten in her new room and make frequent visits to play and pet her if she will allow it. Give her time to investigate you and come to you on her own. Make sure the room you leave her in has been kitten-proofed so she cannot get hurt or into trouble.

When your kitten begins to cry when you leave her alone, it is time to open the door of the room to which she has been confined. Make sure other doors throughout your home are closed. You will want to give her time to get used to the different areas in your home slowly. Let her come out of the room on her own.

Playing safely with your kitten

Learning to play safely with your kitten entails paying close attention to what you are doing as a kitten parent. Cats have a tendency to be full of energy one minute and napping the next. Think of the term "catnap." We use this to describe a short and quick nap. The reason it is called catnap is because cats do this repeatedly throughout the day. When your new kitten has overcome her initial fear of being in her new home, it is important for you to understand that she will start displaying her curiosity through energetic exploring. To help her display this energy in a positive way, you need to play with her. It is your job to help her get her mental and physical exercise needs met. Kittens basically have two modes of play: predatory and locomotive. Predatory play includes behaviors such as pouncing, grabbing, chasing, and throwing things in the air. Locomotive play includes behaviors such as running, climbing, leaping, and finding places the kitten can go into and come out of quickly, such as a paper bag or box. To play safely with your kitten, give her toys that stimulate both modes of play. For predatory play, balls, fake mice (especially those that make noise), and laser pointers are excellent suggestions. Keep in mind, however, that you do not want to get any objects small enough that your kitten can swallow them. Objects with feathers, although fun for your cat,

will end up in pieces around your house. Kittens enjoy tinsel toys too, but they should be offered only during supervised playtime. For locomotive play, one suggestion is to get a cat climber. These come in many different sizes and types. They can be used not only as a place to climb and run through but also as a scratching post or a place to sleep. You can also have a cat tree for your kitten to climb on, scratch, and lay down on so she can oversee her territory.

Social play is great for your kitten, too. However, never use your feet or hands as play objects with your cat. Your kitten cannot tell the difference between your appendages and his toy mouse if both are being presented as toys! Social play is interaction between your kitten and people with other animals within the household. This type of play is important not only for getting along with the family members, but also if you want your kitten to be comfortable around guests in your house.

Litter Box Troubleshooting

Kittens do not usually have to be trained to use a litter box once they know where it is and, of course if it is in a convenient yet somewhat private location. However, there are some cases in which a kitten will not use the litter box. If the kitten is eliminating inappropriately, there is probably a preference problem. In these cases, some of the tips given below may help to determine the kitten's preferences. Wait a week or two between each change to allow the kitten to make a choice and show her preference.

You can try using a different litter. Some kittens prefer litters that clump because they are softer. When trying out a new litter, it is important that you get another litter box identical to the one you already have. Put the same amount of the current litter in one box and the new litter in the other box. Let the kitten make her own decision. Try this for two weeks before making a final decision on which litter your kitten prefers.

Try changing the amount of the litter you put in the box. Some kittens prefer a lot of litter (four to six inches), and others prefer little to none. Try adjusting the level of litter over a week or two. Start off with just an inch or so of litter in one box and no litter in another. Over the next week, gradually increase the amount of litter you put in her box.

If you have more than one cat, get a separate litter box for each plus one extra. Cats often do not like sharing their litter boxes.

You can also try to slowly change the box's location, little by little. It should be placed somewhere that is easily accessible for your kitten, offers escape routes, and is quiet and private because cats do enjoy their privacy. Make sure to clean the litter box on a regular basis. Kittens do not like dirty litter boxes or dirty litter. Scoop the box out a few times a day and wash the litter box at least once a month. If urine or feces gets stuck to the box, the box should be washed immediately.

Check whether the litter box is large enough for your cat. Many commercial litter boxes are not big enough for many cats. If you think this could be a concern, consider a larger plastic container for the cat to eliminate in. A good general rule for litter box size is three times the length of your cat from nose to tail. Plastic storage boxes that are designed to go under a bed make an excellent litter box. They are usually long enough for most cats and low enough for easy entry and exit.

Be sure the litter box offers an easy entrance and exit for your cat. If it does not, you may want to open up the side

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further or consider a new box.

When you first bring your kitten home, you should keep her in one room. This room should contain her litter box. As you gradually introduce your kitten to more areas of your house, the litter box can be moved with her. When she has access to the full house, you can move the litter box slowly, a foot or so every day until it has reached its new location.

If you have a larger home, consider getting multiple litter boxes. Again, place these in areas where they are easily accessible and provide privacy and escape routes.

You can also begin to reward your kitten's good behavior! Pay close attention to your kitten. When she uses her litter box, give her a treat! This may help her want to use her box more frequently and stop the inappropriate elimination.

Any recent changes in lifestyle or home surroundings may cause your cat to suddenly stop using her litter box as well. Cats are very sensitive to any sort of change, and this may be the root of the problem. Sometimes simply moving furniture around is enough of a disturbance for a kitten to stop using her litter box. If you have moved furniture around, make sure your kitten knows where her litter box is and give her lots of assurance that everything is okay. This is, in fact, a great time to introduce a new litter box and reward her when she does use her new litter box.

Helpful Suggestions For Feeding Your Kitten

Start healthy feeding habits as soon as your kitten arrives! Excellent nutrition will influence your kitten's health status, development, appearance and attitude. How you feed your kitten will also help prevent excess weight gain during the growth stage and help reduce the likelihood of obesity as your kitten matures. Nutritional excellence is a key component of wellness medicine, where the goal is to prevent rather than treat health problems later in life. The following tips will get you off to a good start.

- **Choose your kitten's diet carefully**

There is excessive and confusing information in the market regarding kitten foods. The old adage "you get what you pay for" applies particularly well to pet foods. We encourage you not to compare foods by the "Guaranteed Analysis" on the label. This is based on a chemical analysis only and measures gross quantities of ingredient classes – it tells you nothing about the quality or digestibility of the ingredients. Highly digestible kitten food means you feed less. You should expect to pay from \$0.25 - \$1.00/day to feed your kitten (depending on canned or dry proportions)

Be sure to feed your kitten a diet that has successfully completed an AAFCO growth trial.

- **Benefits of excellent nutrition**

Feline Development Formula provides your kitten with exceptional nutritional quality. While eating this diet, we expect your kitten to have luxurious, shiny coat, to be bright and lively, have strong healthy teeth and gums, and make small, well-formed stools. Superior nutrition helps kittens build bone, muscle, tissue, and boosts their immune system to help fight diseases.

- **Feed your kitten as an individual**

Feed your kitten frequent, small meals if possible. Your kitten has a small stomach and high energy needs. You can leave small quantities of dry food out constantly and let your kitten nibble on the kibble as desired. Monitor your kitten's weight/appearance. You should see a lean, well-conditioned body and be able to feel, but not see its ribs. Adjustments in the amount of food left out may be necessary to prevent your kitten from becoming over-weight, particularly between 4 and 9 months of age.

- **Avoid feeding your kitten "human food"**

Establishing right from the start that human food is off-limits will reduce begging and an increased risk of obesity. It also minimizes the chance of cats becoming very picky eaters. If you must feed some human food, stick to small amounts of cooked lean meat and always put them in your kitten's bowl. **Never** feed your kitten from the counter or table.

- **Feed some canned food**

While you may prefer to feed your kitten dry food, you should always introduce some canned food (even just a table spoon a day). Cats are very sensitive to the "mouth feel" of the foods they eat. As cats age, they sometimes develop medical conditions that are better managed by increasing their water intake. Feeding canned food is the best way to do this. Cats that have never been exposed to canned foods as kittens often refuse to eat them later in life, when they may be extremely beneficial.

- **Where to feed your kitten**

Feed your kitten in a quiet place. This helps establish consistency, reduces excitement around a meal and helps reduce the incidence of stomach upset. Ensure that the feeding area is not in close proximity to the litter box – it may interfere with the litter box training.

- **Measure the food, and feed in your kitten's own bowl**

Always measure your kitten's food so that you can make appropriate adjustments as necessary depending on your kitten's body condition. If you have other cats in your home, feed your kitten separately, from its own bowl. Kitten foods are formulated to be optimum for growing kittens – you do not want your adult cats eating kitten food, and vice versa. Dry diets can be moistened with water to soften them for very young kittens.

- **Change diets slowly**

If you are changing your kittens diet, gradually introduce the new diet over 7-10 days. Mix a small amount (1/4 of ration) with the previous diet for the first day or two. Then, increase the portion of the new diet over the next week, until your kitten is only eating the new diet. This will reduce the likelihood of vomiting and diarrhea. Your kitten should make formed stools that are easy to scoop up. Please inform us if this is not the case.

- **Milk**

Cows milk is not recommended for kittens. In fact, many kittens cannot digest milk and may develop diarrhea, as a result. All your kitten needs to drink is fresh clean water.

- **Treats**

More and more of us are enjoying the use of treats to socialize, train and just plain love our kittens. Ask us

about healthy, low calorie treats for your kitten. Treats can be moistened to soften them for very young kittens.

• **How long to feed kitten food**

Your kitten should be fed kitten food exclusively until 9 to 12 months of age. This will help optimize bone and soft tissue development. Adult cat foods are often more urine acidifying and restricted in minerals – this could interfere with optimum bone development in growing kittens.

How to create low-stress veterinary visits for cats

The ominous hissing, the mournful meows, the defensive scratching or biting, the upset bowels – feline stress is just plain unpleasant for cats and you. Many get stressed when it's time for a veterinary visit. Thankfully, there are ways to help cats relax and enjoy the ride – yes, even in the car. Here's what you can do.

1) Transport your cat in a carrier

Putting cats in a carrier on the way to and from the veterinary clinic is extremely important. Cats are often startled by loud noises or other pets, and if you're carrying your cat in your hands, you might not be able to hold on if it abruptly tries to get away. Also, cats that are allowed to roam freely inside the car face the risk of more severe injury should there be an accident.

2) Choose a hard plastic carrier with removable top

Some cats might resist being put in a carrier. But removable tops make getting cats into – and out of – easier. Simply undo the screws or latches, lift the top, set cat in the bottom, and replace the top. This eliminates the need to force the cat inside, which makes the cat – and you – more relaxed

3) Make the carrier a favorite place

Some cats come to love their carriers. When cats see their carriers as safe, enjoyable places, they're happy to go into them and feel safer in scary places, like the car. Use these strategies to create crate-fondness in your cat:

- Leave the carrier out in your house so your cat can access it any time.
- Make the carrier inviting by putting a favorite blanket or toy in it.
- Every now and then, lay a few treats inside the carrier.

4) Head to the veterinary clinic for "happy visits"

Does your cat seem to bristle at the thought of visiting the veterinarian? Then take it on a few stress-free trial runs. Call the veterinary clinic to ask if the schedule would allow you and your cat to stop in for 5 or 10 minutes. You won't be making a medical visit, but rather a mock appointment that allows your cat to experience all the steps of a routine visit without the physical examination. This free-of-charge "happy visit" gives your cat the chance to get used to the sounds and smells of the clinic, meet the veterinary team members, and eat a few treats all while enjoying the safety of the carrier. After some canoodling, you and your cat will head back home.

If a carrier alone puts your cat in a tailspin, entice your cat into its carrier and start by going for a test drive

and your cat spend in the car. Remember to reward your cat with a treat for being a good passenger. Eventually, you'll work your way up to doing a drive that will allow you and your cat to make a "happy visit". Positive reinforcement is the best way to modify feline behavior, so making car rides and veterinary visits pleasant will help decrease your cat's anxiety.

Consistency in the Family

It is important for your entire family to work as a team to successfully train your new pet. Your puppy/kitten will need to learn the meaning of your words, the rules in your home, and your expectations of him or her. You will confuse your puppy/kitten if words, rules and expectations are inconsistent from one family member to another.

Children are great little trainers. It is recommended they be at least three years of age to help with training. Children should be supervised during training sessions. Pets and children should never be left alone unsupervised.

Since puppies do like to chew and kittens like to sharpen their claws, discuss these natural behaviors of puppies/kittens with your children before their favorite toys are chewed, clothing is ruined, and various other problems occur. Let your children know that cruelty (actions such as shocking, hitting, shaking, pulling ears, pulling tails, grabbing or rubbing the pet's nose in feces) will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Many times children don't even realize that what they are doing is cruel to the animal. In addition to children, babies and toddlers should never be left alone with your pet or even with your most trusted adult dog, unsupervised. Puppies and kittens have some basic needs – physically, mentally and emotionally. They need to eat on a regular schedule (consult your veterinarian) and require access to clean, fresh water. Puppies need to relieve themselves frequently as well as nap several times throughout the day. Play, rest, and exercise are all important to young dogs or cats.

Puppies and kittens should have a safe, comfortable place to go when they are not being supervised. Ideally, puppies/kittens should be socialized a few minutes each day, and they should be trained for 5 to 10 minutes at a time. This can be gradually increased as the pet gets older. Each training session should remain short to make it easy for the puppy/kitten to pay attention, but more sessions can be added throughout the day. To care for your pet and maintain consistency while training, develop an action plan for your family. Adults should be actively involved in supervising the following activities. Consider these questions when developing your plan:

- Who will feed the puppy/kitten and when?
- Who will keep the water bowl clean and filled with fresh water?
 - Who will be in charge of the puppy's/kitten's bedding to make sure it is clean?
- What training techniques will you use for house training? Crate training? Litter training? • Who will be in charge of training the puppy/kitten in these areas?
- Who will socialize the puppy/kitten to different people, places, and things? How often and when?
- Who will play with the puppy/kitten? How often and when?
- Who will brush the puppy/kitten? How often and when?
- Who will take the puppy for a walk?

- Who will trim the puppy/kittens nails?

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- Who will brush the puppy/kittens teeth? How often and when?
 - Who will supervise the puppy when not in his or her crate? How long and when?

Give your puppy or kitten room to make mistakes. Being overly demanding and short-tempered can have long term negative consequences on the behavior and enjoyment of your pet over its lifetime.

Always be consistent. If your pet is not allowed to do something today by one person and then allowed to do the same thing tomorrow with someone else, the pet will become confused with the mixed signals. This can even happen with the same person from one day to the next. Mixed signals can confuse your pet and lengthen the time it takes for puppies and kittens to learn what is acceptable and what is not acceptable.

Puppies and Kittens can express their confusion by being overly excited, fearful, shy, timid, or aggressive. In many cases, you may see a combination of behavior problems occurring.

This does not have to happen. Your pet is constantly learning, and every waking hour to them is a learning experience. With time, patience, and training consistency, your pet will become a successful member of your family. End all training sessions on a positive note. If the puppy/kitten is having difficulty learning a new cue, stop before you both get bored or frustrated and ask the pet to do something he/she is very good at, such as asking him to sit. Mark and reward this behavior and end the training session.

Families that work together as a team can be great trainers. Keep the same message every time (be consistent). If more than one family member is training, all family members should train the exact same way. Introduce variations in your training (different locations, different people, and distractions) gradually.

It does not matter what you are trying to teach your pet, just be consistent. If you are training a puppy to do his business outside, then take the puppy out the same door every time. If you want your puppy to be quiet while in his/her crate, don't open the door to the crate when the puppy is barking to be let out. If you do not want your kitten scratching or biting at your hands, never use your hands to play with your kitten. Use an appropriate cat toy instead. Reward the behaviors you want in a consistent manner.

Some people get upset with an animal because they think the puppy/kitten knows what they want. They call their pet hardheaded, or stubborn, or they say their pet has selective hearing. This can happen when you think the pet knows what the word "sit" means. You taught *sit* in the kitchen to receive meals, and now you are outside and the puppy/kitten just will not listen to you. It is not because the puppy/kitten did not hear you, nor does the pet have selective hearing. It is because your puppy/kitten really does not know what "sit" means outside. Dogs and cats do not generalize very well- they learn in context. That means the puppy/kitten has to be taught *sit* in various places with different people, the puppy/kitten now understands that "sit" means put its rear end on the floor whenever it hears that word.

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PET INSURANCE

Pet insurance is a relatively new option for pet owners today. Depending on the company and coverage selected, your pet can be covered for everything from annual wellness appointments, to emergency treatments. Premiums and packages vary quite a bit from company to company, so it is important to do your research in selecting the best coverage for you and your pet.

Some of the companies offering pet insurance in Canada include;

Company	Website	Phone Number
Pets + Us	www.petsplusus.com	1-800-364-8422
Petplan	www.GoPetplan.ca	1-866-467-3875
Trupanion	www.trupanion.ca	1-855-210-8749