

Caring for Your New Cat

A guide for adopters





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Congratulations!

You are a hero! Not only have you helped save the life of your new furry companion, but there is now one more space for another deserving cat at the shelter. The Nova Scotia SPCA dreams of a time when all healthy and sound animals will find loving new homes. We are one step closer thanks to the support of adopters like you.

Bringing home a new cat is very exciting. We ask that you read this guide and keep it as a reference. The number of pet owners in Canada is increasing, so please remember you are never alone. There are many support groups as well as avid animal lovers to exchange stories, ideas and helpful hints, or just to listen. In this guide you will find information on everything from diet and nutrition to litter training advice. We hope you will find your new cat's companionship as rewarding as we did while he or she stayed with us.

On behalf of all the staff, volunteers and the animals, thank you for making adoption your option!

To get started, here is a list of basic supplies you will need:

- Cat food (for recommendations, see **Food and Nutrition** section)
- Food and water dishes
- Litter box and scoop
- Litter (avoid clay clumping litters)
- Scratching post or box
- Collar and ID tag
- Cat toys such as "crinkle balls" or toys containing catnip
- Travel kennel
- Cat brush
- Leash and harness (if your new cat will be going outside with you)
- Cat bed with washable cover or blanket

Arriving Home

Cats are curious, independent and sensitive animals. Cats usually require a lot of time to fully adjust to a new environment. You can help your cat through this adjustment by making them feel secure in their new home.

Prepare for the new arrival

Choose a room in your house that you can temporarily confine your new cat to when you bring them home. This should be a room that any existing pets do not spend a lot of time in, but one that you spend some time in, such as a computer room. In this room, place a new litter box with clean litter, food and water bowls, a sleeping area, a scratching post and a few toys. Keep the food and water bowls as far away from the litter box as possible. If you are bringing home a new kitten, make sure the room is "kitten proof." Remove breakable





objects from low shelves and make sure there is nothing in the room that could harm the kitten once they start exploring.

Confine your new cat to the prepared room

Bring your new cat into your home in a carrier and take them directly to the prepared room. Inside the room with the door closed, open the door of the carrier and let your new cat out. Don't force them—they will come out when ready. Remember, this has been a stressful day! Spend some time with your new cat and reassure them with a soft voice and a few friendly pats or scratches. Go ahead and leave your new cat on their own for a little while to explore their new space and get comfortable.

Introducing a New Cat to Your Existing Cat



The majority of cats can learn to get along with other cats, but the introduction period must be handled carefully to increase the chances of success. It is hard to undo a bad start, so consider this short upfront effort a long term investment in the happiness of all the cats and people living in your household. The introduction of your new cat to your existing cat(s) can be handled in phases, as described below. Depending on the cats, it can take from a week to a month or longer to successfully work through all the phases. Give them time, and don't move on to the next phase until you believe that they are completely comfortable with their current situation.

It is very important to have a prepared room that the new cat can have all to himself, separate from any existing pets. Enter and exit the room carefully as your existing pets will quite likely be waiting outside the door to see what is going on. It's too early for introductions yet, so make your escape calmly but quickly. Now it's time to reassure your old cat(s) with some attention. Throughout this phase (and all phases), make sure both the new cat and your existing cat(s) get to spend plenty of time with you or a family member.

Create a positive association

This phase involves feeding each cat something that they enjoy, such as treats or soft food, next to the closed door, so that the new cat and existing cat are doing something they love (eating) while smelling and sensing each other.

Swap scents

This phase has two parts. (1) Provide your old cat(s) with a blanket that the new cat has been lying on, and allow them to sniff and investigate it. Similarly, place something in the new cat's room that would smell like your old pets. Give them all time to adjust to the smells. If their reactions are not aggressive (e.g. excessive hissing or growling), move on to step 2. Otherwise, move back a step or two and give them more time. (2) Confine the old cat(s) to a single room in the house. Let the new cat out of its room and allow them to





investigate the house and its smells. Without the cats coming into contact with each other or seeing each other, place the old cat(s) in the new cat's room and let them explore. After a short time (half an hour or so) put everyone back where they belong.

Safe introductions

For this phase, use two door wedges (one on either side of the door) to hold the door open between the cats just enough that they can see each other and stick their paws through to touch each other, but not enough for any heads or bodies to get through. Alternatively, if you own a baby gate that can easily be pressure-mounted in the doorway, place the baby gate between the cats, but be careful no one feels brave enough to jump over! Give them some time to get used to the sight and touch of each other, praise their good behaviour, and then close the door again.

Get a little closer

Be patient, we're almost there! In this phase, allow your cats to actually have contact with each other. If you live in a big house, it would be wise to close some of the bedroom/bathroom doors in order to limit their roaming space, because you need to stick with them wherever they go. Have a towel in your hand, just in case someone decides to get aggressive. A little hissing, spitting or light tapping is fine, but when a brawl breaks out, you need to take control. Scoop up your old cat if you are comfortable that they won't turn on you, but otherwise lightly throw the towel over the aggressive cat, make your way in to break up the fight, and separate the cats once again. In this case, the cats need more time and you need to go back a step. On the other hand, if they are able to calmly exist in the same room for a while (20 minutes, perhaps), praise them all and then separate them again. Continue with these introductions throughout the next few days (or longer), for increasing lengths of time. Use positive reinforcement such as play time and treats while they are together to convince them that their co-existence is to the benefit of all.

The final integration

Eventually, you will feel comfortable enough to allow the cats to be together when you are in the house, without the need for your undivided attention. However, when you are not around for a quick rescue, such as when you leave the house or when you are sleeping, continue to separate them. In time, you will become confident in their new found relationship, whether it be new best friends, or simply indifference, and you will be able to leave them together at all times. To prevent potential litter box issues, continue to provide a litter box in the new cat's initial room. If you want to move it elsewhere, do this in inches at a time until it reaches its final destination. It is recommended that there is one litter box per cat in your home, and that they are cleaned daily.

Happily ever after

Great job, you're done. Thank you for offering your home to a new cat, and for taking the time to start things off right. Now all you need to do is provide all of your pets with a lifetime of love and happiness!





Introducing Cats and Dogs



Any current dogs in your family should be kept on-leash while meeting your new cat. Make sure you are there to supervise all their interactions as they get to know each other. You want to prevent a chase scenario, where the cat becomes scared, takes off and your dog chases. Set up gates, barrier systems or room doors so that your new cat can easily get to a safe spot that your dog cannot access.

Curiosity is normal and can be a good sign of things to come. However, a dog that lunges at a cat is a warning that the dog should not be allowed off-leash or left alone with the cat unsupervised. If frightened by one another, most often both cats and dogs will choose the flight option (running away) instead of the fight option. It is important that both cat and dog have room to maneuver without feeling confined, and that there is a clear escape route to your cat's designated safe area.

Cats and Kids

Bringing a new cat or kitten into a home with children can be the beginning of wonderful friendship. However, it is important that kids understand how to interact with cats and kittens to avoid injury or discomfort for the cat and the child, and to help build a lasting, healthy relationship. Set the following ground rules for kids before they meet your new cat:

- **Do not** squeeze a cat, pick them up by their neck, or pull their tail.
- **Do not** chase or lunge at a cat. Cats are sensitive to loud noises and sudden movements, and will feel threatened if they are chased or lunged at.
- **Do not** disturb a cat while they are eating.

Teaching children how to introduce themselves to a cat and how to read their behaviour can help them learn respect for animals and to appreciate that cats are sensitive, complex creatures. The following tips will help both kids and adults get to know a new cat:

- Approach a new cat slowly and quietly. Cats sometimes feel threatened or nervous when someone new approaches them.
- Talk to the cat in quiet, gentle voices.
- Sit down and wait for the cat to come to you.
- Hold out your hand slowly for the cat to smell.
- See if the cat will let you scratch them gently under the chin or on the top of the head.
- Do not pet the cat's belly because this is considered a threatening action by many cats.

Even a friendly cat will scratch or nip when anxious. Learn how to recognize when a cat is irritated—most cats give “signals” that they are irritated, such as a hiss or long, drawn out meow, flattened ears, wide open eyes, or a twitching tail. Also watch out if a cat refuses to make eye contact, tightens or flattens their body, walks away or refuses to sniff your hand. If you notice any of these signals, stop and give the cat some space.





Food and Nutrition



Proper nutrition is very important part of pet care—it helps keep your cat healthy and is important in managing disease. By understanding your cat’s nutrition needs, you can prevent disease and extend your cat’s life so you can enjoy their unconditional love longer.

If you have adopted a new kitten, they should be fed food that is formulated for kittens until they are one year old. Kitten food has higher levels of the nutrients needed for kittens to grow and develop.

Whether an adult or a kitten, your cat’s diet should include 6 basic groups:

1. Water

Just as humans are told to drink 8 glasses of water, your cat needs a generous supply of water at all times. A good way to do this is to buy a pet fountain where the water circulates and provides filtered, fresh, non-stagnant water. Milk should be avoided as cats will often get an upset stomach from the lactose in milk.

2. Protein

Protein builds, maintains and replaces muscle in animals’ bodies. Younger pets are usually very active, and need protein to help build heart muscles and maintain their immune systems.

3. Carbohydrates

Carbs help break down sugars, which in turn are a source of energy for the body.

4. Fat

Fats are an important part of a healthy diet for pets. Fats are another energy source, especially for younger pets. Vitamins in food need fats in order to be absorbed into the body. Fats also make food tastier.

5. Minerals

Minerals have an important function in food as they help the body grow, develop and stay healthy. The body uses minerals to perform different functions—from building bones, to transmitting nerve impulses. Minerals commonly found in pet food include calcium, phosphorous, potassium, sodium, magnesium, iron, zinc, copper, manganese, iodine and selenium.

6. Vitamins

Vitamins and minerals will help your cat’s body work and grow. There are two groups of vitamins: fat-soluble (A, D, E & K) and water-soluble (thiamine, riboflavin, niacin, pantothenic acid, folic acid, vitamin B, choline, and vitamin B12).

Reading Food Labels

The Consumers Packaging and Labelling Acts and Regulations only require product name, net quality of food and name of manufacturer or dealer to be printed on the package. Most manufacturers include more details such as a guaranteed analysis, list of ingredients and nutritional statement.





Guaranteed Analysis

Guaranteed Analysis shows the minimum and maximum levels of crude protein, fat, ash (minerals), fibre and moisture (water) in the food. Remember, this does not guarantee the availability or digestibility of the ingredients.

Ingredient List

Ingredients can be listed in any order, thus you will not be able to determine how much of an ingredient is in the food. The ingredient list gives no indication of quantity or quality of the ingredients.

Nutritional Statement

This displays the purpose of the food, i.e. cat food, dog food, puppy food. If you see a CVMA logo (Canadian Veterinary Medical Association), then the food has been inspected by the CVMA. The quality and consistency of pet food in Canada is not regulated by the government.

How Much to Feed Your Cat

Pet food packaging usually includes a guide for feeding your cat based on their weight and age. The amount to feed a cat will vary depending on whether you are feeding dry and/or wet food. Most wet food has a lower caloric content than dry food. Wet food also has higher moisture content, which will help cats if they are having urinary problems. Dry food is good for cleaning teeth. Wet food is preferable for cats who have decaying teeth or do not drink enough water.

Treats

Take your cat's weight into consideration when deciding whether they should be given treats. Low caloric treats can be found at your local veterinary clinic. Your veterinarian can also tell you whether or not your cat should be having treats based on their current weight. They may even suggest a low caloric diet for your cat if they are overweight.

Same Food, Day in, Day out

Changing a pet's food can cause stomach upset, vomiting and diarrhoea. If you need to change your cat's diet, you should do so little by little. For both wet and dry food, add a little of the new food to their old food over time to allow their digestive systems to adjust.

Magnesium-Controlled and Ph-Balanced Food

A common problem in cats is a disease called Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD). This can be caused by stress, infection, allergy, dehydration and diet. Some cats do not drink enough water, leading to crystals forming in their urine. If you know your cat is not drinking enough water, you can supplement their diet by giving them wet food, which has a higher water content than dry food. You can also mix water in with dry or wet food. It is important that a cat who has FLUTD drink more water because they are more susceptible to renal failure later in life because of the lack of water they need.





To encourage your cat to drink more water, keep many bowls of water out and offer them running or moving water by using a fountain or running water in the sink. Signs that a cat may be experiencing crystals in their urine include frequently going to the litter box, excessive licking of genitals, failing to use the litter box, howling or meowing when in the litter box, small amounts of urine in the litter box, urinating elsewhere in the home, or pink or red urine indicating blood in the urine. This condition can be life threatening because the crystals can cause a blockage of urine flow, so if you suspect your cat may have FLUTD, take them to the vet.

A Safe Cat is a Happy Cat: Keeping Your Cat Indoors



When you adopt a cat, you commit to providing a good home to the cat by keeping them healthy and safe. The only way you can truly do this is by keeping your cat indoors. Cats are domesticated animals that rely on their human caregivers to love and protect them. The benefits of keeping cats indoors are many; the disadvantages are none.

Gone are the days when letting cats roam freely outside was considered natural and normal. Just as it is no longer acceptable to keep a dog tethered outside all day long, it is no longer acceptable to allow a cat to run free, facing danger after danger.

The statistics speak for themselves: Indoor cats live an average of 12.5 years. Cats that roam free outside live an average of only 2-5 years, which reflects the precarious environment that outdoor cats face. Cats that are allowed outside are at risk of:

- Getting lost and never being found, or becoming one of the tens of thousands of cats who end up in animal shelters every year.
- Being struck by a vehicle and left to suffer from injuries or die by the side of the road.
- Being attacked by unfriendly dogs, wildlife, or other cats defending their territory.
- Facing an angry property owner who does not appreciate cats in their yard or garden.
- Contracting diseases such as feline leukemia or immunodeficiency viruses, or diseases and illnesses that they can pass on to humans, such as rabies or toxoplasmosis.
- Picking up fleas, ticks or other parasites.
- Becoming sick from eating garbage, poisons left out by others, rodents, birds or toxic plants.
- Exposure to the harsh Canadian weather, with risk of frostbite in the winter and dehydration in the summer.
- Injury or death from crawling under or inside a vehicle.

Roaming cats who are not spayed or neutered also contribute to cat overpopulation. The Canadian Federation of Humane Societies estimates that 50,000 cats are euthanized in Canadian animal shelters every year; many of these cats are former pets who became strays after wandering away from home, or are the offspring of roaming cats.





If you let your cat outside, it poses a danger not only to them, but to other animals as well. According to the American Bird Conservancy, it is estimated that free-roaming cats kill hundreds of millions of birds, small mammals, reptiles and amphibians each year. These wildlife populations are already struggling to survive habitat loss, pollution, pesticides and other human impacts.

To help ensure your indoor cat lives a happy life, not just a long one, improve their indoor environment by:

- Providing scratching posts or boxes so they can exercise their claws without damaging your furniture. Remember to also trim your cat's claws regularly.
- Giving them a place to perch up high, such as a sofa by a window, a window ledge, a shelf, or a cat tree.
- Turning your windows into a cat movie theatre by setting up a bird feeder nearby.
- Letting your cat try out different toys until you find the type they like best. Engaging your cat in play will help them get exercise while being entertained.
- Adding a second cat to your household for companionship, especially if you are gone from the home for long hours.
- Cleaning your cat's litter box daily and providing one litter box per cat.
- Bringing the outdoors in by growing some cat grass in a pot for your cat to eat once the grass is grown.
- If you have a screened in porch or enclosed balcony, letting your cat spend some time there to get some fresh air. Alternately, consider building or purchasing an outdoor access enclosure for your cat.
- Training your cat to use a leash and harness. This is another way to let your cat get a taste of the outdoors while keeping them safe. Leash and harness training a cat takes a great deal of patience, but can be a rewarding experience for both cat and owner.

If your cat has become used to being allowed outdoors, you can help them become an indoor cat by following the suggestions above for creating a fun indoor environment. The easiest time to begin keeping an outdoor cat indoors is in the late fall, when the outside world is a bit less exciting to a cat. Once you have made the decision to keep your cat inside, stick to it, and be prepared to endure their persistent meowed objections. Letting them out for even a short time will only make the transition more difficult. Keep in mind that it is you who knows what is best for your cat, not the cat. By deciding to keep your cat indoors, you are doing what is in their best interest and giving them a healthier, longer life, and more opportunities to spend time with you.

Vet Care

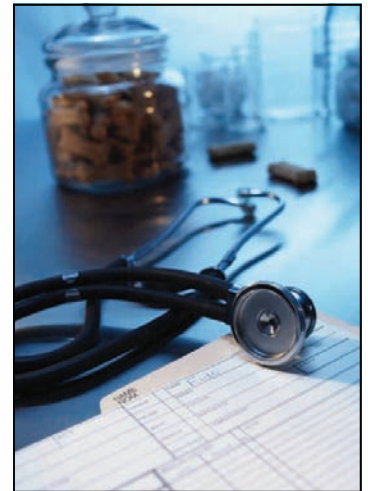
Making sure your new companion is in good physical condition should be one of your top concerns. It is important you attend the initial visit and discuss any medical or health concerns you may have with your veterinarian. If you haven't yet decided who will be your regular veterinarian, call vets in your area, or ask for recommendations from the SPCA or friends and family.





Most cats leaving SPCAs in Nova Scotia will have received a de-worming and a basic booster that covers most of the common viruses applicable to cats. Your cat will most likely have been spayed or neutered. Depending on the season, your cat may have also received a flea prevention treatment. All of this information should be documented in your cat's health record, which you should take with you to all of your appointments.

Veterinary care varies greatly, from vets with traditional views and methods, to holistic vets with alternative treatments. Some vets may specialize in certain breeds or skills. Veterinary services, including hours of operation and cost, may also play a factor in determining which clinic you select. It is important to become familiar with the local veterinary emergency clinic. Many emergency pet incidents occur at inopportune times, like late in the evening or on a Sunday when your regular veterinary clinic is closed.



Spaying and Neutering

There is always a large number of cats in shelters across the province waiting for responsible and loving homes. Adult cats are often spayed or neutered before leaving SPCAs in Nova Scotia. Kittens may be adopted with a certificate for their spay or neuter operation, which must be completed by the age of six months. Spaying and neutering is the best way to combat the pet overpopulation crisis.

A female cat in heat is very stressful for any family and possibly your neighbors, keeping you awake all hours of the night howling and acting in ways that can be embarrassing. Unaltered male cats will "spray" their territory, leaving behind an unpleasant odour that is difficult to eliminate. Both males and females, if not spayed or neutered, may also experience medical problems such as testicular cancer, and occurrences of urinary complications are much higher.

Declawing: Take Your Cat's Side

Few issues divide the opinions of cat owners more than declawing. Most people know a family member, friend or co-worker who has declawed their cat and staunchly defends their decision with claims of needing to save their living room sofa from being damaged. Is surgical amputation that has no therapeutic benefit to an animal justifiable on the grounds of preventing damage to inanimate material possessions?

The Nova Scotia SPCA, and animal welfare organizations around the world, say **no**.

Declawing is an extreme approach to dealing with a common feline behaviour. The Nova Scotia SPCA opposes altering animals for non-medical purposes, but recognizes and accepts that surgical alterations may be necessary if it is the only alternative to euthanasia, a position that is shared by the Canadian Federation of Human Societies. In several countries, declawing of cats is banned under animal cruelty laws. For example, the





United Kingdom, through the section of the *Animal Welfare Act* that addresses mutilation, prohibits interference with the sensitive tissues or bone structure of an animal for purposes other than medical treatment. If your reaction, or that of others, is that calling declawing “mutilation” is too strong, consider what the procedure entails.

When a cat is declawed, it is not simply their claws that are removed, but the entire first joint of their toes to which the claws are attached, including bones and soft tissue. This is similar to amputating the first joint of a human’s fingers and toes. However, the result is even worse for a cat because they rely on all ten tips of their toes for balance when walking. The pain and discomfort felt by declawed cats following surgery, and possibly lasting for the rest of their lives, may bring about undesirable behavioural changes. A cat may stop using their litter box because it is uncomfortable or painful to dig. A once friendly cat may start biting during play or interaction because they are unable to comfortably swipe or use their claws. Declawing cats also limits their ability to defend themselves during confrontations.



There are many alternatives to declawing that will save your cat from unnecessary, life-altering, painful surgery while helping prevent damage to household possessions. Since cats need to scratch to shed the sheath of their claws and to mark their territory, provide your cat with scratching posts and scratching boxes as a safe way for them to find relief. A good scratching post is sturdy, with a heavily weighted bottom, and tall enough that an adult cat can reach up to scratch. Scratch boxes rest horizontally on the floor and are often made of corrugated cardboard. Some cats prefer scratch boxes because they can sit on one end and scratch the other, holding the box in place and providing greater resistance. To encourage your cat to use a scratch post or box, try playing with them around it or using catnip to attract them to it. Use positive reinforcement, such as praise and treats, when your cat uses the scratch post or box. Do not drag your cat’s paws across the post or box to teach her how to use it. Cats already know how to scratch and forcing them to do so may discourage them.

If your cat still prefers your sofa over the scratch post or box you have provided, you can deter them from scratching these objects by placing tinfoil or double-sided tape over the spots they scratch. Most pet supply stores carry products that help deter cats from furniture, such as sprays that give off a smell cats do not like. Another option is Soft Paws nail caps, which were developed by a veterinarian. Soft Paws are made of non-toxic rubber and slide over your cat’s claws, held in place by adhesive. The nail caps create a blunt end for your cat’s claws, allowing them to scratch freely without causing any damage. Soft Paws will stay in place for 4-6 weeks and come in a variety of colours, from clear to pink and blue. They are available at pet supply stores, veterinary offices and online at www.softpaws.com.

Regular nail clipping should also become part of your routine with your cat so their claws do not grow too long, causing discomfort for the cat, and to help minimize damage to items they scratch, including human playmates! A cat’s claws should be trimmed every couple of weeks using special clippers that are available at pet supply stores and veterinary offices. Read the instructions and be careful not to trim past what is called the “quick,” the solid-coloured part of the claw containing blood vessels and nerve endings. It may take some time for your new kitten or adult cat to get used to you trimming their nails, so be patient and reward them for cooperation and good behaviour.





Reward yourself as well: by saying **no** to declawing, you are a responsible cat owner who has done what is best for your feline companion.

Handling Common Cat Behaviour Issues

Hiding and Shyness

Hiding is a normal occurrence for many cats in their new homes. Some cats may spend a few days or even months under beds or in closets. If your cat is very shy you may want to keep them confined to their own room, limiting their access to the entire house, unless you can provide supervision and ensure they can access their litter box, food and water. Offer your cat extra tasty bits of food and talk to them in a gentle voice when they do start to explore. Do not force your new cat out from a hiding spot as it will only make their fears worse and their adjustment harder.



Litter Box Training

For the most part, cats are easy to litter box train. Kittens typically learn this from watching their mothers when they are between 5-8 weeks old, and rarely is the behaviour forgotten. If your cat is having accidents outside of the litter box, they should be examined by a veterinarian. Most litter box issues are due to medical problems such as urinary tract infections, a painful health risk for your cat. If your veterinarian gives your cat a clean bill of health, you should explore the following factors that may be influencing your cat's behaviour:

Location: Privacy is important. Avoid placing the litter box in high traffic areas. It should be out of the way, yet accessible for daily cleanings.

Litter type: Most cats prefer basic gravel litter. There are a variety of cat litters on the market that vary in price and performance. Veterinarians typically do not recommend clumping kitty litters due to possible blockages in the intestines and breathing distress from cats inhaling or licking the litter off their paws when bathing. If your cat has recently had surgery, your veterinarian may recommend a paper based litter to prevent wounds from becoming infected.

Litter boxes: Litter boxes can be covered or open, and cats may feel more comfortable in one or the other. Accidents that are found just outside of an open litter box are usually easily fixed by changing to a litter box with a cover, or providing a litter pan with a lower height for easier entries and exits.

Keep it clean: Your cat's litter box should be given a quick scoop on a daily basis to remove any waste. Cats are very tidy animals, and many will not use a dirty litter box.

Multiple cats, multiple boxes: Some cats will share a litter box while others will not. If the number of





cats in your household is greater than the number of litter boxes, multiple daily cleanings will help ensure success and reduce odours.

Changes: Any change to location, litter type or the box itself may cause an issue for your cat. Changes should be made slowly and one at a time to easily identify any problems.

Destructive Scratching

While some cats are more intense at scratching than others, all cats instinctively need to scratch. Your new cat should be provided with a designated spot and item to scratch. The most popular solutions for scratching are scratch boxes, scratch posts and scratch hangers. More elaborate “kitty trees” or “kitty condos” can be constructed or purchased as well.

In order to scratch, cats look for an easily visible, soft surface, deep enough for their claws to sink into, but soft enough that it shreds or seems to shred. Most cats like to scratch items that have a carpeted or rope surface, or are made with corrugated cardboard or wood.

Scratching products available from pet supply stores range from small carpet hangers that can be hung on a door knob for cats who enjoy vertical scratching to flat cardboard floor boxes that most cats find hard to resist. For more information about training your cat to use a scratching product and tips for preventing your cat from scratching furniture or other items, see the **Declawing: Take Your Cat’s Side** section of this guide.

Allergies: Know Your Options

Discovering that you or someone else in your household may be allergic to cats after bringing your new feline friend home can be a heartbreaking experience. The American SPCA states that 15-20% of the population is allergic to animals. While many physicians will recommend giving up your cat once allergies present themselves, this drastic step is not always necessary. By understanding your options, you might be able to keep your cat and be allergy free, or at least reduce the severity of symptoms. If you suspect an allergy in the household, consider the following:



- Find an allergy specialist who can help pinpoint the cause of the allergies and recommend treatment options such as medication or immunotherapy.
- Eliminate or reduce other sources of allergies that may be contributing to symptoms, such as dust and allergy-collecting carpets and fabrics.
- Use HEPA (high-efficiency particulate arresting) filters in vacuum and air purifiers to prevent the spread of allergens.
- Clean your cat’s litterbox frequently and use a low-dust, perfume-free litter.
- Wash your cat’s bedding often.





- Ask your veterinarian about products that can be used on cats to prevent dander build-up.
- Brush or comb your cat frequently.
- Create an “allergy-free” room, such as your bedroom, that your cat is not allowed to enter.
- Wash your hands after handling your cat and, if possible, have someone else clean the litterbox and brush the cat.

Sources and Additional Reading

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