Petcover® the Kitten Guide



Everything you need to know about caring for your new family member

Welcome

Congratulations on welcoming your new kitten into your home! Whether you are young or old, new additions to the family are always exciting.

Kittens are adorable and very rewarding, they can also be challenging at times as they are quite mischievous. To thrive, kittens need lots of attention, a healthy diet, a safe environment and veterinary care.

This guide will give you useful information and tips on caring for your kitten during the early days and beyond. From regular care to training and vaccinations, we're here to help you shape your new companion into a healthy and confident cat.

Please seek veterinary advice regarding any further information or recommendations.

The Petcover Team

Contents

New kittens

Kitten milestones 2

Settling in

Preparing your home 5
Kitten checklists 6

Feeding

Kitten cuisine 8
What NOT to feed your kitten 10

Behaviour

Training your kitten 12
Social behaviours 16

Health

Vet health checks 19
Common injuries and diseases 20
Regular health checks 23

Caring

Grooming 25

FAQ 26



Kitten milestones

Your kitten will experience many different stages on its journey to becoming an adult cat. Below are some of the important milestones your kitten will go through:



Did you know...

It takes a year for a kitten to become a fully grown adult cat!

Newborn	Welcome to the world! Your kitten is born deaf and blind and solely depends on its mother up until three to four weeks old.
2 to 6 weeks	Your kitten is still pretty wobbly, their eyes and ears are starting to fully form and open; their senses of smell and hearing are beginning to develop. You can start introducing a litter box, and wet food as your kitten's teeth have begun to grow. Implement a worming routine fortnightly until about 12 weeks of age, then continue monthly until six months old.
6 to 8 weeks	Your kitten is almost fully weaned and is becoming more confident, knowing how to socialise and play. They are mostly eating solid foods and using their litter box. It is now time to start their vaccination programme to protect them from diseases and illnesses and to consider pet insurance.
10 to 12 weeks	Now fully weaned, kittens are ready for their new family and home. Have a look at our kitten shopping list on page 7 to ensure you have everything you need. Remember, your kitten will require their second booster vaccination.
14 to 16 weeks	Your kitten has settled in and is more familiar with their lifestyle and environment. It's time to start reducing daily feeds to three per day and complete their third booster vaccination.
6 to 12 months	The kitten adolescent stage. Time for routine vet checks and neutering. Kittens usually get neutered around six months old; talk to your local vet for advice about when your kitten is ready.
12 months onwards	Your kitten is now considered an adult! Provide them with the right nutrition, regular health checks and loads of love. Switch their food to adult cat food to ensure you are giving them the nutrients they require.



Preparing your home

To ensure a smooth transition, preparing in advance will help your new kitten feel comfortable and safe in their new home.

To help your kitten adjust to its new surrounds and aid with litter training, prepare a confined space to keep your kitten for the first weeks. A padded cat bed with a fleece blanket gives your kitten a warm and secure place to sleep.

Keep the space you have chosen free from any potential dangers (see list on page 6) or anything that may cause a risk to your curious kitten.

Your kitten will need access to fresh food and water. Ensure the bowls are kept separate and away from the litter tray. We recommend keeping the litter tray in a discreet corner of the room.

A scratching post is useful, not only to protect your furniture from getting damaged but it also helps your kitten exercise and stretch their muscles. Have a couple of toys ready, as kittens are super active and enjoy playing!

Their first 24 hours

Your kitten has arrived! The first day can feel exciting yet daunting for everyone. Kittens may be timid or scared at first, but they will start to feel comfortable once they get to know their new home.

The preparations you made before their arrival will allow you to concentrate on giving them the love and encouragement they need to settle in comfortably.





Kitten-proof your house

- Close up gaps behind kitchen appliances and under fitted cupboards.
- Screen off open fireplaces.
- Check for loose floorboards.
- Close all external windows and doors.
- Do not leave hot liquids unsupervised.
- Place cleaning fluids, disinfectants, and medicines in cupboards.
- Place electric cables out of reach.
- Close toilet lids.
- Remove any potentially poisonous plants or cut flowers such as lilies, ivy, rubber tree plants and lantana.
- Remove fragile ornaments and any tiny objects that could be swallowed, such as elastic bands.
- Do not let them near garage roller doors.
- Do not let your kitten outside unless supervised or in a kitten enclave. Many kittens are killed or injured roaming the streets.

Kitten shopping list

Essential items:

- Cat bedding (high-sided).
- Food and water bowls.
- Kitten food.
- Cat litter, litter tray, tray liners and scoop.
- Collar with bell.
- Catnip spray.
- Cat crate or carrier.
- Flea, tick and worming treatments.
- Pet insurance.

Extras:

- Play toys (such as teething toys and fun toys).
- Scratch post.
- Treats.
- Brush, comb, and nail clippers.
- Waterless cat shampoo.
- Cleaning wipes.





Kitten cuisine

What should I feed my kitten?

Choosing the right food is vital for the growth and health of your new kitten. Continue to feed your kitten the same food given to them by the breeder for the first few weeks. If you wish to change their diet, make sure you introduce new food slowly. Have a two-week plan for gradually changing your kitten's diet; this will reduce the risk of an upset stomach or diarrhoea.

Kittens are carnivores and require food with a high meat content. Either in the form of wet or dry food, as both are beneficial to their health.

For recommendations on suitable food for your kitten, talk to your vet or your local pet shop. Be sure to purchase food that is specifically for a kitten and always check the age requirements and ingredients.

Your kitten will need fresh water daily, especially if you are feeding them a mainly dry diet.

How often should I feed my kitten?

During your kitten's developmental stages, providing them with the right nutrition is very important. Keeping track of their food intake is vital to reduce the risk of any diet-related health problems like obesity or diabetes. Try limiting the number of treats or snacks you give to your kitten.

A kitten between the ages of 10 to 14 weeks should be feed at least four meals a day, then dropping to three per day. Once they have reached six months, reduce feeding to twice per day. Further recommendations can be found on the kitten food label or ask your vet or local pet shop.


Did you know...
Most kittens are lactose intolerant and will get upset stomachs if given cows milk.

What NOT to feed your kitten

Kittens are curious and can consume the wrong foods easily. Keeping certain foods out of their diet is vital to their health.

Your kitten should not eat any of these foods:

- ✖ Raw fish
- ✖ Grapes and raisins
- ✖ Bones
- ✖ Spicy food
- ✖ Liver
- ✖ Milk
- ✖ Cheese
- ✖ Coffee and tea
- ✖ Onions
- ✖ Tomatoes
- ✖ Mushrooms
- ✖ Avocado

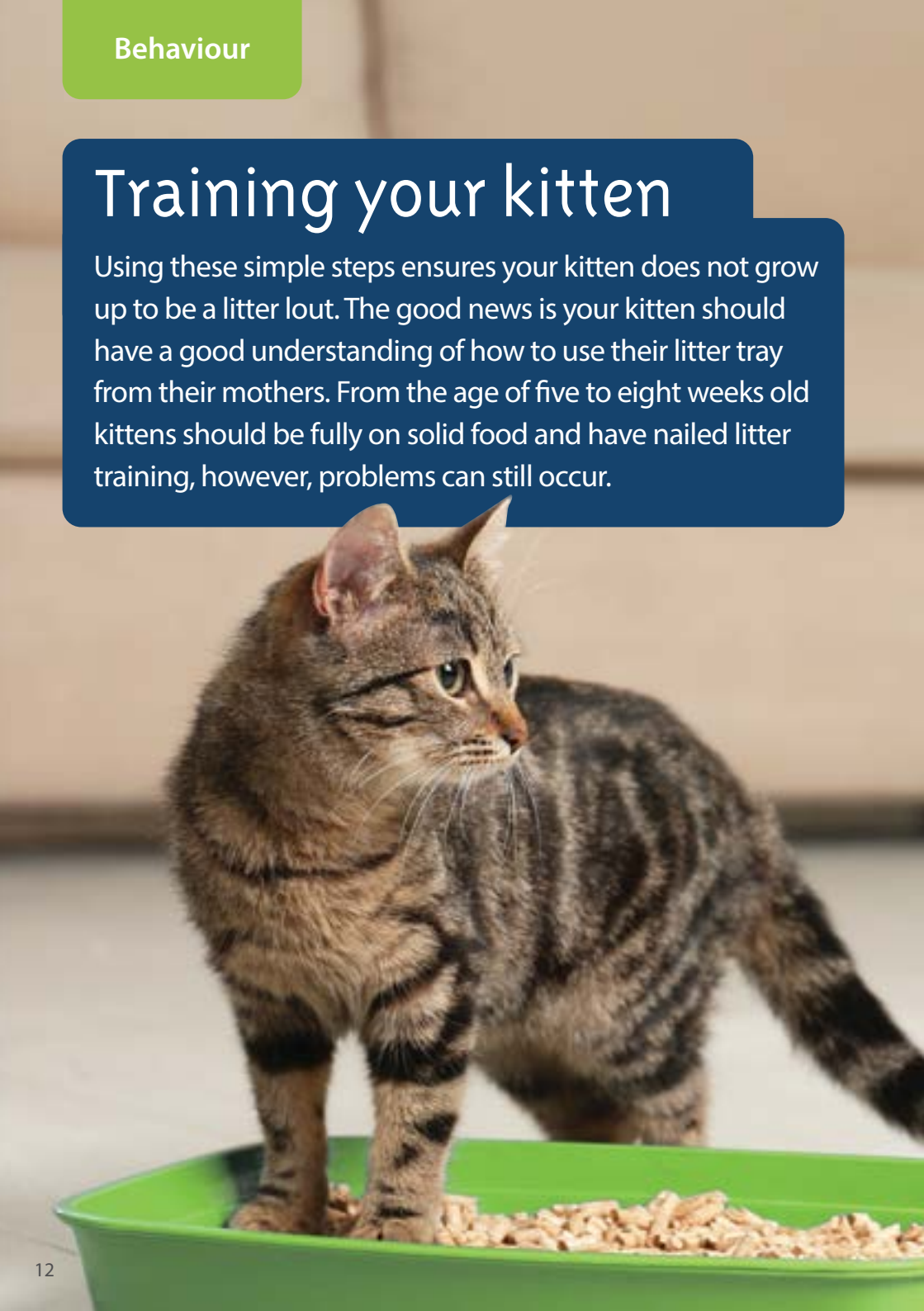
Some of these food items can cause serious issues, such as kidney damage, digestive difficulties, bone problems, increased heart rate, vomiting and diarrhoea.

Because kittens are naturally inquisitive, they may ingest something toxic or dangerous, leading to unexpected illnesses resulting in expensive veterinary treatment.


Did you know...
Digestive system disorders are one of the most common cat conditions!

Training your kitten

Using these simple steps ensures your kitten does not grow up to be a litter lout. The good news is your kitten should have a good understanding of how to use their litter tray from their mothers. From the age of five to eight weeks old kittens should be fully on solid food and have nailed litter training, however, problems can still occur.



Here are 5 steps to ensure your kitten succeeds:

1. The most common reason for a kitten not using a litter tray is because it is dirty. Cleaning it regularly and avoiding scented litter will reduce this problem.

2. If you already have other cats in your home, becoming familiar with them can be a big hurdle for your new kitten. The stress of other cats in the home can make kittens too anxious to use the litter tray. Sometimes multiple trays will help them become familiar with other pets.

3. Your kitten may dislike the texture or nature of a new litter, so ask the previous owner or breeder what type of litter your kitten is used to. If you wish to change it, gradually mix in a little more of the new litter over time.

4. Consider the location of the litter tray. Do not place it near your kitten's food or in a busy area; choose a quiet corner, away from noises. Some scent from its urine in the litter can reassure the kitten that this is the place to use.

5. If your kitten is scratching at the floor or withdrawing behind a chair, pick them up and gently place them on the litter tray. Scratch the clean litter ahead of the kitten, and it will usually take the hint.

Wild thing!

Have you thought about whether to allow your kitten outside? Many owners face this decision, so try and base this on your living arrangements, environment, as well as your personal gut feeling.

Allowing your kitten outside

We recommend you wait until your kitten is fully vaccinated, microchipped and desexed before they are allowed outside unsupervised.

Outdoor access provides your kitten plenty of opportunity for climbing, exploring, and sharpening claws. Cats that are allowed outside can indulge in typical feline behaviours and they get plenty of exercise, reducing the risk of obesity.

Consider putting a bell on your kitten's collar. It will help you to locate the kitten and limit damage to the local bird life.

Keeping your kitten inside

Many people keep their cat inside to ensure they will be safe from the outside world. Inside cats have a much longer life expectancy, are less likely to suffer from injuries, parasites, or contagious diseases, and will thankfully never know the dangers of traffic.

A compromise

Sometimes a happy medium is perfect for both the owner and the kitten. Allowing your kitten to roam and explore the world - while keeping them inside throughout the night- gives them a level of freedom yet keeps them safe.

SCAREDY CATS

Contrary to popular belief, cats aren't as scared of dogs as we think, according to Petcover's recent cat owner survey. Things that do scare our feline friends are vacuum cleaners, fireworks, strangers and cars. However, 81% of cats are allowed outside during the day, although 55% are brought back inside at night, due to road-safety concerns.


Did you know...
Cats are more scared of vacuum cleaners than they are of dogs.

Social behaviours

Here are our tips to ensure your kitten grows up to be a happy and sociable cat.

The importance of touch

Kittens quickly learn to appreciate human contact from the get-go if they have a good mix of independence and attention.

Human interaction is essential for young kittens, influencing their behaviour right into and through adulthood. Early handling produces friendlier kittens, less likely to experience high levels of stress or to develop behaviour problems as an adult.

Continue gentle handling when your kitten comes to live with you, and always supervise young children around your kitten.



Signs to look out for:

- If your kitten is misbehaving, it could be due to a lack of attention or affection.
- If your kitten is urine spraying (which is a common form of communication), this is due to feeling distressed and insecure. Consider why it may feel threatened in its own home.
- If your kitten is acting aggressively, it may be feeling threatened and is trying to avoid confrontation.

Consider any outside factors; some neighbourhood cats may be territorial and may cause issues for your new kitten.

Remember, all kittens have different social behaviours. Your kitten needs clear signals of positive and rewarding interaction to know who they can trust around them.

To beat boredom and keep your kitten entertained, give them lots of toys and a scratch post to increase mental stimulation and overall happiness.

Become a kitten whisperer

Here are some key body language signs you can pick up from your kitten's mood:

Behaviours	Meaning
Flattening of the ears and rotating them partly backwards. Standing upright and side-on to appear bigger and is closing pupils to tight slits.	They are showing aggression - angry or irritated.
Standing tall and side on with back arched and fur stood on end. Its head is down and is hissing.	It is defensive and appearing aggressive.
Blinking slowly.	It is conveying reassurance and/or affection.
Purring.	They are relaxed and happy. However, cats purr to communicate other emotions and needs, too.
Rhythmically padding its paws back and forth.	It is behaving as if you are it's mother.
Hunching its body, with pupils open to a wide circle and ears flattened.	It is being defensive.
Flicking its tail back and forth.	It is irritated and checking that all is clear behind it.
Tail extended straight up.	It is happy.
Walking with its tail up.	It is greeting you or another cat.
Walking normally with the tail held up but with the point hanging down.	It is relaxed.
Staring continuously.	It is conveying a threat to another cat.





Vet health checks

Your vet can help by providing vital preventive healthcare, as well as giving you essential advice on parasites, nutrition, neutering, dental care, and behaviour tailored to your kitten. As your kitten progresses through life, regular vet visits are essential for their well-being.

Vaccinations

Vaccinating your kitten is one of the most important things you should do as a cat owner.

All cats need vaccinations to protect them from dangerous, preventable diseases and the process starts at six to eight weeks old with a course of three injections. These injections protect your kitten from two major types of cat flu viruses (Feline Herpes Virus 1 (FHV1) and Feline Calicivirus (FVC)) and feline enteritis.

Vaccination schedule:
First vaccination - six-eight weeks old.
Booster vaccination - 10-12 weeks old.
Final kitten vaccination - 14-16 weeks old.

Worming

Most kittens have a burden of worms, often passed from their mother through the milk or placenta. You should make sure your kitten is wormed every two weeks up to 12 weeks old with a good-quality wormer from your vet. After 12 weeks, worm monthly until six months old, before adopting the adult regime of a treatment every three months.

Fleas

Fleas may be tiny, but they can cause problems, especially for young kittens. A heavy infestation can lead to serious health issues like anaemia. To ensure that your kitten is flea-free, your vet can advise you on the most appropriate treatment and ongoing preventative products.

Microchipping

Microchipping is the most effective form of routine identity protection. It is a safe procedure where a tiny chip - the size of a grain of rice - is implanted under your kitten's skin. The chip can be scanned at vet clinics and animal shelters to identify your pet. So, if your cat is lost, it can be quickly reunited with you via the national database. Remember to keep your contact details up to date!

Neutering

Neutering your kitten is a common practice and considered a part of responsible cat ownership by many experts, unless you plan on breeding your cat.

Neutering is a safe, routine procedure, and your vet can advise you on the process and the recovery. While neutering is optional, it prevents unwanted litters and provides health benefits. Owning an unneutered female can bring all kinds of problems when she is in season. It is recommended to neuter your kitten around 6 six-months-old before they hit puberty.

Breed Specific Conditions

BOAS stands for Brachycephalic Obstructive Airway Syndrome, a condition that compromises the air movement in the mouth, nose and windpipe. It occurs in certain flat faced breeds of cats such as Persians, Himalayan and Burmese. BOAS affects an animal's ability to exercise, sleep and eat.

Insurance

No matter how careful you are, your kitten can still become ill or injured. Pet insurance gives pet parents peace of mind by taking the financial worry out of having a cat. It allows you the freedom to choose the right treatment based on the best medical options available.

For information on kitten or cat insurance options available or to get a quote, please call us on **0800 400 720**, or visit our website **petcovergroup.com/nz** or email **info.nz@petcovergroup.com**.

Common injuries and diseases

Here are the top 5 claimed injuries and diseases for cats:

Condition	Petcover paid*
Foreign body ingestion	$10,200
Gall stones	$9,278
Kidney infection	$8,375
Urethal obstruction	$7,459
Heart murmur	$7,093

* The amounts shown are an example only and are based on Petcover Group data. Claimable amounts vary depending on selected cover and are subject to the policy terms and conditions.



Regular health checks

There are simple health checks you can do with your kitten at home. Giving your kitten regular health checks will help it find vet examinations less stressful. Here are some easy health checks to do:

Posture

A healthy cat's gait is steady and fluid. Look for limping, signs of pain or loss of balance. Weak hind legs or walking on the hocks may be a sign of conditions such as diabetes.

Weight

You should be able to feel your cat's ribs, but they should not protrude. If you are unsure, check your breed's ideal weight with your vet.

Teeth and gums

Baby teeth should be pearly white (and sharp!) and the gums a healthy pink. Kittens teethe up to eight months old, gums may be red and swollen, with a little bleeding after a baby tooth has fallen out.

Tail

Look out for lumps, tail-dragging and a lack of sensation in the tail.

Ears

Signs of infection include increased brown wax, an off-white discharge, or a musty smell.

Eyes

Check for excessive tear production, a thick discharge, redness, a difference in blinking, closed eyelids and swelling

Coat and skin

Run your hands over the body to check for any lumps, wounds, or scabs. Also, check for fleas and ticks, especially in summer.

Paws

Occasionally lift and touch your kitten's paws so that it gets used to having them inspected. If your kitten has an injured paw, it may avoid walking on it. Gently check the paw for wounds, redness, or objects such as thorns or splinters, and take your kitten to the vet if it appears injured.


Did you know...
A kitten's whiskers are as long as their bodies are wide.

Grooming

Your kitten is an excellent self-groomer, regular brushing can give them an extra glossier and healthier coat.

Basic grooming care

Get a good bristle brush and to start off slowly to get your kitten used to it. Maintaining a good routine will allow your kitten to feel comfortable and grow to love it. Consistent brushing helps reduce their hair from matting or getting hairballs. For the best outcome, brush from front to back within line of their fur.

Nail care

Kittens and cats nails can get very sharp, and some cats will need their nails clipped, particularly older or less active cats. Starting at a young age allows them to get comfortable; start by playing with their claws and paws to get them use to it.



FAQ

Why do cats hate water?

All cats are curious and like to explore their water bowls, but most do not like being fully submerged in water. A drenched coat weighs down your kitten, making them uncomfortable, and it can take a long time for their coat to dry. Cats, ever-diligent with their personal hygiene routine, spend about a third of their waking hours grooming. A sopping-wet coat makes this job very difficult.

Why do kittens sleep so much?

Kittens on average sleep for 90% of their day and whereas cats sleep for 70%. Cats are crepuscular, a zoological term for animals or insects that are active in twilight (between dusk and dawn). That's why your kitten spends much of the day and night sleeping.

Kittens are adaptable to change, adjusting their sleeping habits to spend more time with their loved ones.

Why do kittens purr?

Purring is a form of communication for kittens and usually indicates an emotional response. This may happen when they are feeling happy or relaxed but also distressed or scared.

How long do cats live?

Cats unfortunately do not have nine lives. The good news is they are living longer due to medical advances and more time spent indoors. A cat's average lifespan is 12 to 15 years old, and factors such as environment, health and care play a role in their life expectancy.

Why do kittens scratch?

Scratching is a normal behaviour for kittens, a habit inherited from their wild ancestors. It is a natural way for kittens to remove old nails and allow new ones to grow. A scratching post is a must, especially to protect your furniture!





Petcover®

At **Petcover**, we are as dedicated to pet insurance as a cat is to catnip.

Our mission is to offer comprehensive pet insurance plans, fast claim processing, and outstanding customer service.

Pet insurance is all we do, and we do it best.

Petcover NZ - 101D Station Road, Penrose | Auckland 1061 | New Zealand

Ph 0800 255 426 | **petcovergroup.com/nz** | **info.nz@petcovergroup.com**

Petcover NZ Limited (6683237)
(NZBN: 9429046576941) Registered NZ Limited Company.

Find us online