

# Managing Your Older Cat's Health

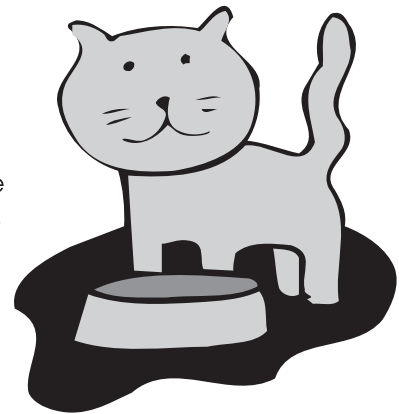
These suggestions will enable you to provide the best health care allowing your dog to live as long as possible.

## Annual physical examination

A year between physical examinations for your cat is like four to seven years between annual examinations for us. Once your cat develops symptoms of age-related illness, twice yearly examinations are recommended.

## Nutrition

Feed the highest quality food you can afford. Premium pet foods such as Science Diet Senior<sup>®</sup> or Eukanuba Senior<sup>®</sup> are much more digestible and result in a healthier pet with less stool volume. Some cats with diseases such as heart and kidney problems will require specific prescription diets as part of their medical treatment. Cats between 7 and 12 years of age are often too heavy, while cats over age 12 tend to become too thin. Your cat's dietary needs may change several times as he or she ages.



DO NOT feed table scraps and snacks. Older pets are more prone to dietary upset from too much variety in the foods they eat.

Many senior pets have dull, dry coats. Vitamin supplements may be needed. Supplements also help with arthritis, inflammatory bowel disease and kidney disease.

Constipation is a common and uncomfortable problem in older cats. The fiber content of your cat's food is very important and supplements are available for this as well.

Make sure your older cat doesn't have to compete for food with younger, stronger cats. You may need to feed old or ailing animals separately to ensure they are receiving their fair share.

## Internal Parasites . . .

threaten your cat's health. In large numbers they can cause intestinal blockage, bloody diarrhea and even death. Older cats are more susceptible to parasites. Certain types can also affect you and your family. Microscopic examination of your pet's stool needs to be done regularly.



## Provide a constant supply of fresh, clean water

Increased thirst is a symptom of several serious diseases. Please notify us right away if your pet seems to be drinking or urinating more than in the past.

## Vaccinations and boosters

Older animals, like older people, have decreased resistance to disease. Unfortunately there is no safe, effective drug available to combat any of the major viral diseases of cats. Vaccination is the only effective form of protection. Vaccination enables your cat to fight infection by stimulating the immune system so it makes antibodies against the viruses.

To maintain this protection, cats must be vaccinated regularly so the level of immunity is always high enough to prevent disease. This is especially important in older cats. Immunity produced by vaccination does not last forever. It is very important that your cat be revaccinated regularly. However, we may adjust our vaccine protocols when your cat becomes very elderly.

## Dental Care . . .

is just as important for your pet as it is for you. The average lifespan of a cat that receives timely dental care is 15-20% longer than one that doesn't. Infected teeth and gums are very painful to your cat, and also spread infection to the kidneys, heart, liver and elsewhere. Dental cleanings are a necessary component of a long, happy life for your pet.

## Prevent Obesity

Extra pounds burden the heart, kidneys, joints and muscles, decreasing life expectancy 30% to 50%. Cancer, liver disease and diabetes are common in overweight, middle-aged cats.

## Brush your cat regularly . . .

to prevent mats and tangles. After brushing, wipe with a damp towel to remove loose hair. This is especially helpful if members of your household are allergic to cats. It also helps to prevent hairballs. Older cats sometimes become lax in their grooming habits, especially if arthritis makes it hard for them to stretch and bend. Extra care with grooming may be needed. Pain medication and glucosamine can stop arthritis pain and improve quality of life.



Also keep a close eye out for lumps and bumps. Tumors in and under the skin are very common in older cats. The earlier they are taken care of, the less danger they will spread to other organs.

Keep an eye out for fleas, dandruff, sores or bald spots. Report any skin problems to your veterinarian.

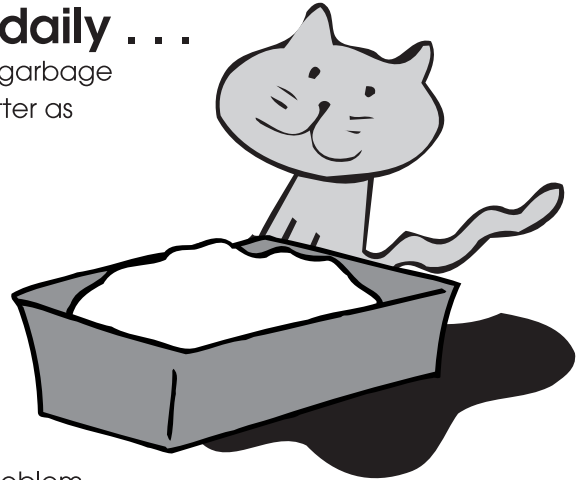


Preventing fleas with regular use of effective flea products is much less costly than treating a full blown infestation of fleas in your home. DO NOT waste your money on over-the-counter flea products. Most do not work and some can even be harmful to your pet, especially if he or she is ill or on medications. Our products provide good control and we will take the time to individualize a flea program to suit your requirements and budget.

## **Scoop out your cat's litter pan daily . . .**

and empty it completely at least once a week. Plastic garbage bags make economical liners. Avoid heavily scented litter as many cats don't like it.

Arthritis may make it more difficult for your older cat to enter and exit the litter box. A more shallow pan may be needed, or cut out part of one end. If your cat has to go up and down steps to get to the box, you may need to move it to a more accessible location.



Any accidents outside the box can signal a medical problem.

## **Never give aspirin, ibuprofen or Tylenol (acetaminophen) to your cat.**

However, prescription pain medications are available to treat many conditions, including arthritis, in senior cats.

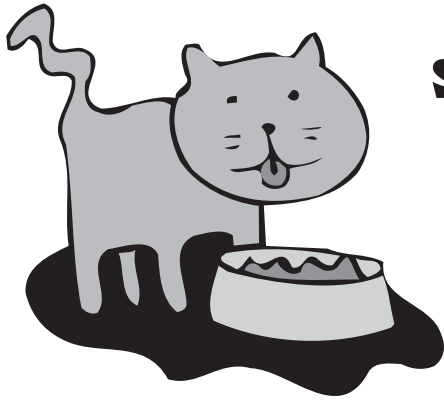
## **Report any changes or problems . . .**

in your cat's health or behavior to your veterinarian as soon as possible. Diseases or behavior problems usually are more successfully treated the earlier they are addressed.

## **As your cat ages . . .**

blood and urine testing, as well as X-rays, help detect many of the problems caused by aging (kidney, liver, heart, arthritis, dental etc.). Early detection can lengthen your pet's life. Proper treatment will improve your pet's quality of life.





## Specific Recommendations For Your Cat:

Food: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Vitamins/Supplements: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Dental care: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Surgery: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Laboratory testing: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Exercise: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Preventative health care is much more than just vaccinations! We are here to help you assist your cat in living a long, healthy life at the lowest cost to you.

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