Nutrition for Every Life Stage

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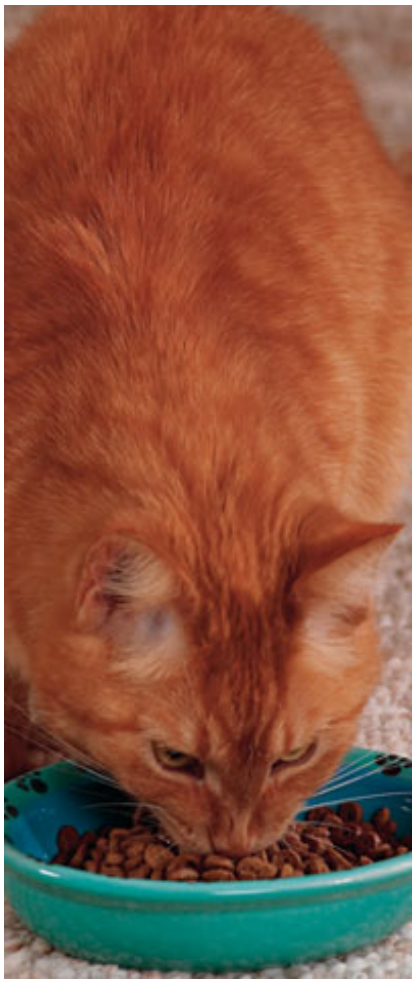

nutrition for every life stage

Nutrition is the single most important factor when it comes to cat health. Cats of all ages need high levels of protein in their diet. They also need certain amino acids such as taurine and arginine, and fatty acids such as arachidonic acid and linoleic acid. Cats require a preformed Vitamin A, which is present only in foods of animal origin, and may be listed in cat foods as retinyl palmitate or acetate. However, your cat will have certain special nutritional requirements depending on which life stage she is in (kitten, adult, or senior).

Kittens (birth-12 months)

A kitten's diet is the foundation of her health throughout her life. To keep up with their rapid growth, kittens require an extremely high amount of energy, protein, fats and minerals compared to older cats so feeding a diet high in these nutrients is necessary. Calcium and phosphorus are also important in order to promote healthy tooth and bone growth through kittenhood and into adult life.

Adults (1-6 years)

Adult cats require a nutritious and balanced diet to help maintain their health and weight. A high-protein, wholesome diet containing real meat is important to ensure that she is well proportioned, and has an observable ribcage with only a slight amount of fat covering the ribs. A well-balanced diet with natural antioxidants, such as those found in fruits and vegetables, is highly beneficial in order to promote a healthy immune system and body function.

Senior (7+ years)

Senior cats, even if they slow down a bit, usually require the same number of calories as younger cats. Aging cats often have a difficult time absorbing vitamins, minerals, and fats so it is important that your cat food contain a sufficient amount of highly-digestible ingredients. As with kittens and adult cats, a diet made with high quality meat, along with vitamins and natural antioxidants from fruits and vegetables, is highly beneficial.

Choosing the Right Food

When you're shopping for a healthy food for your cat, the ingredient list on the back of the bag is a good place to start. Use label recommendations as a portion guideline to avoid overfeeding, but be willing to adjust according to your cat's body condition and activity level. Also, it is important to choose a food that fits your cat's health conditions. For example, if your cat has medical conditions such as diabetes, allergies, or digestive difficulties, her diet requirements will need adjusting.

When it comes to good nutrition, your cat depends upon you. Make well-informed decisions regarding your cat's diet, and talk to your veterinarian if you need assistance.

LIMIT OR ELIMINATE TREATS AND TABLE SCRAPS

The extra calories and decreased nutritional value of treats and table scraps are often the biggest offenders when it comes to weight control. Treats are generally better than table scraps, and have their use, as when training cats to 'come'. But giving too many treats can have serious

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consequences. Most cats, when it comes right down to it, would rather have your attention than a treat. Spending extra time playing or grooming your cat will probably give you both much more satisfaction than the treat, which is gobbled up in three seconds and then forgotten. Many times table scraps are high in fat and/or sugar, providing nothing more than empty calories: definitely the wrong food for a trim waistline. Overweight pets, besides not looking their best, have a higher risk of many health problems.

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