

Solutions to Cat Boredom

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Have you noticed a change in your cat lately? Is she sleeping too much? Does she seem obsessed with food - or has she lost interest in food?

Is she displaying negative or destructive behaviors such as aggression, or excessive grooming, scratching or inappropriate elimination? When medical conditions or extreme changes in your household are not factors, these behaviors may be the undesirable result of boredom.

Boredom is not uncommon in indoor cats. Though indoor cats are known to sleep a large portion of the day, when awake they should keep busy hunting, playing, and defending territory by peering out windows, exploring any open cupboard or dark cubbyhole, and climbing up to elevated vantage points. When your cat is not doing these things, examine her environment and even your methods of care. Something may not be right.

Many factors cause boredom and its associated negative behaviors. Primary causes include extended periods of confinement or confinement within a small room. Also suspect is lack of socialization with other cats or humans, or extended periods of time alone each day. Still other cats experience boredom because of a lack of mental and physical challenge, playtime, or toys and other items with which to interact.

Boredom and inactivity rear up in negative behaviors at first, but over time can lead to actual illness, such as depression. It's important to deal with the signs of boredom right away.

You will notice a pleasant change in cats that are given more stimulation, socialization, and assorted "play and prey" challenges. But indoor cats depend on you to provide it.

Here's what you can do for the health of your cat:

If your cat has to spend extended periods alone each day, keep a radio playing or play relaxing music for her.

Get her some new [toys](#) - especially toys that she can [interact](#) with by herself, and rotate them periodically. Hide some of them around your home in places she frequents. Or provide simple pleasures such as cardboard boxes with entrance holes.

Socialize her by introducing her to many people and other friends' pets, when safe.

Minimize confinement as much as possible - freedom to roam is very basic to cats. If you don't already have one, get a climbing [tree or tower](#). Vertical space is just as important to cats as horizontal space.

Cats are used to hunting for food in the wild. Though she may eat a [well-balanced diet](#) from out of a bowl, there's no reason you can't duplicate the hunting instinct within your home by offering toys that move like [real prey](#), or give her toys that you've hidden treats inside for her to fish out. Also consider allocating part of her regular dry diet for hiding around the house. She'll enjoy the search and reward activity.

When feasible, bring another cat into your home as a companion.

Get a [pet stroller](#), [halter collar and leash](#), or [outdoor enclosure](#) and reward her with the pleasures of outdoor sights and sounds.

Set time aside everyday to give your cat some one-on-one attention (combine with a [grooming session](#) or [dental-care session](#)).

WE RECOMMEND

Interactive Toys Pen Enclosures Strollers Furniture & Window Perches