Feeding Kittens and Pregnant/Nursing Cats FAQs

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

- What should I feed my pregnant/nursing cat?
- How is kitten food different from adult food?
- How much food should I feed my kitten?
- What about kitten treats?
- At what age should I switch my kitten to adult food?

What should I feed my pregnant/nursing cat?

Pregnancy: Your adult cat should eat a healthy adult pet food such as Drs. Foster & Smith Chicken & Brown Rice formula prior to breeding, to ensure optimal health before pregnancy. Continue feeding Drs. Foster & Smith adult cat food for the first few weeks of pregnancy. Starting the fourth week of pregnancy, begin adding Drs. Foster & Smith Chicken formula kitten food to her diet. Each week increase the amount of the kitten food and decrease the amount of adult food, so when she is in her final week of pregnancy, she is eating all kitten food. Increase the frequency of the daily meals to three by mid pregnancy. She may need to eat small meals every 3-4 hours during the last week of the pregnancy as the kittens continue to take up more room.

Lactation: During the last week of pregnancy and the first 3-4 weeks of lactating, your cat may eat 1½-2 times the amount she ate before pregnancy. She should receive the food as long as she gains a healthy amount of weight without becoming obese. In order to produce an adequate supply of milk, a lactating cat needs access to fresh water at all times.

Additional Information: If a high-quality food is being fed, a pregnant cat does not usually need any additional supplements. Poor diet or incorrect supplementation can cause problems with the developing fetuses or the mother. If you have questions about diet or supplements, talk with your veterinarian.

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How is kitten food different from adult food?

Kitten foods are higher in protein, vitamins, minerals, fat, and other nutrients a growing kitten requires.

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How much food should I feed my kitten?

You can start with the recommendations on the package. Adjust the amount of food according to your kitten's condition, activity level, and environmental temperature (kittens need a lot of energy to stay warm when it is cold). Your veterinarian can assess your kitten's weight during routine kitten exams, and help you adjust the quantity you feed. After your kitten is spayed or neutered her/his calorie needs will decrease. Your veterinarian can help you determine how much less you may need to feed your kitten.

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What about kitten treats?

Treats should never account for more than 10% of your kitten's caloric intake. Your kitten's food is his sole source for the nutrition he needs, so be careful not "fill up" your kitten on treats.

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At what age should I switch my kitten to adult food?

Most commercial kitten foods are developed to feed until 12 months of age. At that point, you can switch your kitten to adult cat food. If you have questions about what to feed your older kitten, contact your veterinarian.

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