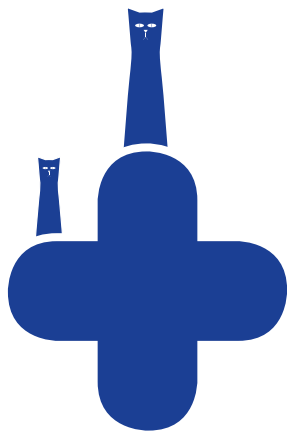
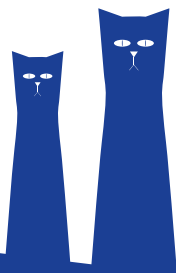


# Caring for your cat



**CATS PROTECTION**  
**ESSENTIAL GUIDES**



*Cats can be independent souls and are great pets for people with busy lifestyles, but they still need to be looked after. Keep your cat happy and healthy by following this advice...*

## **Key cat care**

All responsible cat owners should make sure their cat is:

- neutered
- vaccinated against disease
- microchipped
- regularly treated against parasites
- seen by a vet when ill or injured

### **Find a vet**

You will need to register your cat with a vet. A recommendation from a friend or neighbour is a great place to start. Otherwise you could phone around or pop in and see your local vets before making your choice. It is essential that you get on with your vet and have faith in their abilities.

### **Neutering**

This is a simple operation which has many health benefits for your cat. The cost of the operation depends on where you live and your choice of vet. Cats Protection recommends neutering domestic cats from four months of age but you should seek veterinary advice.

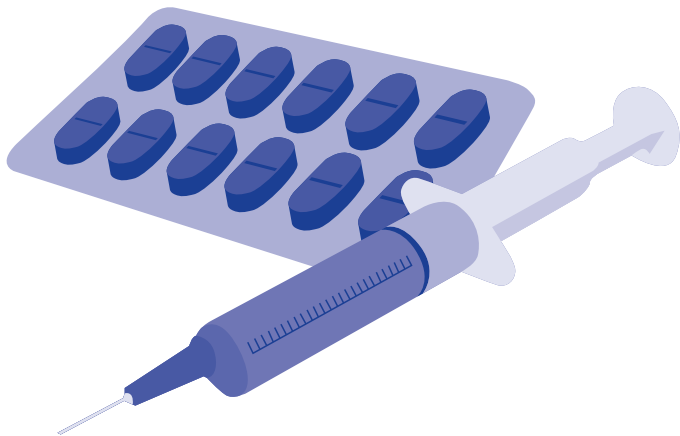
We may also be able to contribute to the cost of the operation. For more information see Cats Protection's [\*Essential Guide: Neutering\*](#).

## Vaccinating

This will help your cat stay healthy and help stop the spread of disease. Vaccinations are available against:

- **Feline infectious enteritis (also known as feline parvovirus or panleucopenia)** – a severe and potentially fatal gut infection
- **Cat flu** – a common type of respiratory disease that can have lasting effects
- **Feline leukaemia virus (FeLV)** – a devastating fatal disease that damages the cat's immune system and can cause cancer
- **Chlamydophilia** – a bacteria that causes severe conjunctivitis, along with mild sneezing and nasal discharge

Kittens need their first vaccine at nine weeks old and a second dose at twelve weeks. It is also recommended that your cat receives annual booster vaccinations throughout his life to help protect him from these diseases. Consult your vet for more advice.



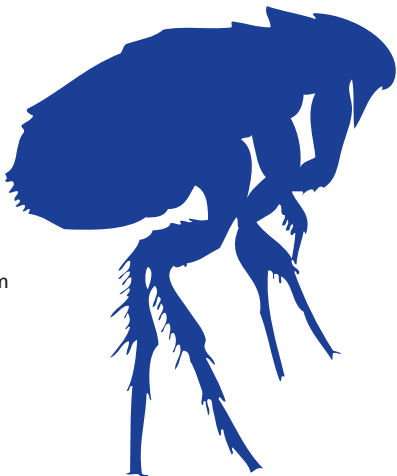
## Microchipping

Cats Protection recommends microchipping as the safest and simplest means of permanently identifying your cat. A microchip no bigger than a grain of rice is inserted under the cat's skin between his shoulder blades. Each chip carries a unique ID number linked to a database containing details of your cat and your name and address. If your cat goes missing, he can be scanned to reveal his details and returned quickly to you. So, do not forget to update your details if you move house.

## Fleas

Fleas are very common in cats but can be hard to spot. If your cat is scratching a lot then he may have them. It is best to regularly treat your cat for fleas whether he has them or not. Powders, sprays, mousses, shampoos and spot-on products are all available to tackle the problem. The most effective are supplied by your vet.

If you do have a flea outbreak, you will need to de-flea your home, too. Treat carpets, the bottoms of curtains, furniture, your cat's bedding and his favourite sleeping places. Again, the best products are available from your vet.



## Worms

Cats can get two types of worm – roundworm and tapeworm. You must de-worm your cat regularly. Again there are many different treatments available including tablets, liquid, paste, granules and spot-on. Your vet will be able to advise you about the most suitable product for your cat.

For more information see Cats Protection's [Veterinary Guide: Fleas and parasites](#).

## Dental care

Dental disease is quite common in cats, especially as they get older. You should get your cat's teeth regularly checked by your vet.

Signs of dental disease include:

- loss of, or little or no appetite
- dropping food or difficulty in eating
- blood-tinged saliva or drooling
- face rubbing or pawing at the mouth
- behavioural changes, such as becoming quieter or more aggressive
- reduced grooming
- sneezing, nasal discharge or facial swelling

Dental disease can become serious as bacteria can enter the bloodstream and affect the heart and kidneys. Feeding your cat dry food or special cat chews can help him maintain healthy teeth and gums.

## Feeding

Cats should be fed once or twice a day. There are many different brands of cat food on the market, but there are two types to choose from; wet and dry. Do not forget to make fresh, clean drinking water available at all times. For more information, including information on feeding kittens, see Cats Protection's *Essential Guide: Feeding*.

Remember, cats are carnivores and cannot be vegetarians.

## Exercise

Exercise is essential for your cat's health and wellbeing. Some cats like nothing better than running around the garden and will not need much encouragement to exercise. Others prefer to spend more time indoors or may have to stay inside for medical reasons. For more information on indoor and outdoor cats, see Cats Protection's *Essential Guide: Feline behaviour*.

A scratching post is a good investment and is essential if your cat spends most of his time indoors. You can buy or make one that is tall enough to let your cat stretch fully. Scratching and stretching means your cat can flex his muscles, shed old claw sheaths and indulge in his natural behaviour.

Play is one of the best forms of exercise. Your cat will love to bat around a ping-pong ball or even a scrunched up piece of paper – you will enjoy the game too! Play such as this is essential for indoor cats.

## **Time for a snoozzzzzz**

Cats spend around two thirds of their lives asleep so make sure you provide him with a quiet, cosy place where he can grab a nap. You can buy a bed or basket but do not be surprised if you find your cat sleeping somewhere completely different – probably your bed!

## **Grooming marvellous**

Cats are very clean creatures and wash and preen themselves all day, but sometimes they may need a little help.

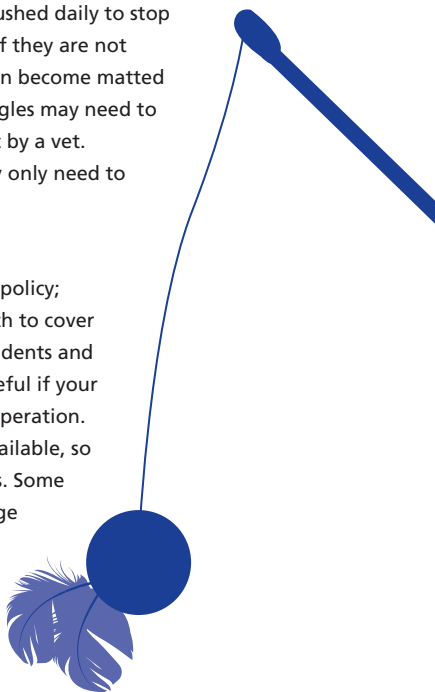
Long-haired cats should be brushed daily to stop their coat becoming tangled. If they are not regularly groomed their fur can become matted and uncomfortable. These tangles may need to be removed under anaesthetic by a vet.

Short-haired cats will probably only need to be groomed once a week.

## **Insurance**

Pet insurance is like any other policy; you pay a premium each month to cover veterinary costs for illness, accidents and emergencies. It can be very useful if your cat has to have an expensive operation.

There are plenty of options available, so shop around for the best deals. Some will not insure pets over the age of eight, so check the small print. Remember that preventative treatment such as vaccination is not always covered.



This leaflet is one of a range provided by  
Cats Protection on issues surrounding cat care.

Cats Protection is the UK's leading feline welfare  
charity and helps around 140,000 cats and kittens each  
year. We rely entirely on public generosity to finance  
this vital welfare work.

For more information on **adopting a cat**,  
**volunteering for us** or **making a donation**,  
visit **[www.cats.org.uk](http://www.cats.org.uk)**



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