



Feline Forum

Courtesy of:

What Your Veterinarian Will Check

Taking kitty to the veterinarian every year for its annual physical will help keep her healthy and disease free. While the yearly visit to the doctor may not be her favorite adventure, your peace of mind in knowing that every system has been examined will be worth the extra loving you'll have to give her when you get home.

On a standard annual physical/examination, your veterinarian will check:

- ◆eyes for excessive tears, pupil response, and redness,

- ◆nose for paleness or discharge,
- ◆mouth for bad breath, tooth tartar, gum color and swelling,
- ◆ears for mites and discharge,
- ◆body for hair loss and bumps, and
- ◆abdomen, lungs, and general appearance.

In addition, your veterinarian will check her weight, heart, temperature, and stool for parasites. If all is well your doctor will discuss with you which vaccines your cat needs.

Playing With Your Kitty

When looking into your kitty's eyes see if her pupils are dilated. If so, you can bet she's ready to play. Most cats love playing and it usually doesn't take a lot to get them interested. Wiggling a string across the floor, laying down an open paper grocery bag (never use plastic), tossing a crumpled up piece of paper, or rolling a small ball to chase are a few favorite games that don't require a lot of effort or money. No matter what you choose to play, your kitty will love playing with you!

For a kitten, play is necessary for proper development; for an older cat, it may be the only exercise she gets. Remember, even the most solitary of cats enjoy the attention they get from playing. It's good for them and for

you, too. Play also keeps cats mentally alert and helps prevent boredom.

Favorite Games To Play

- ◆Flashlight tag using a small flashlight or laser pointer. Cats love to chase the light across the floor, over furniture and up walls.
- ◆Poke two holes through a Ping-Pong ball and pull a string through. Tie a knot at one end so the ball falls to the end of the string.
- ◆Tie ribbon or string to a stick and dangle it in front of your cat and play catch-the-ribbon.

How To Deal With An Aggressive Cat

If kitty suddenly shows aggressive behavior, take her to your veterinarian to rule out any medical problems. Many times a change in demeanor is the first sign of something physically wrong.

The best way to recognize a change in your kitty's health is to know what is normal for her. Handle and touch her daily to detect burrs, injuries, external parasites, and unusual bumps. As you brush or comb, rub her all over with your hands.

Two of the most common changes in behavior that may be caused by a health problem are aggressive behavior such as growling, biting or scratching, and house soiling. Aggression is often triggered by physical pain or is used when the cat wants to avoid pain. Housesoiling can be triggered by health related challenges such as urinary tract or intestinal disease, arthritis, sudden diet changes, or by mental changes associated with old age.

Play aggression is often seen through stalking. When you move under the covers or make the bed, the cat waits in ambush and then quickly and silently runs towards you. She may look frightening and may grab you with her paws and bite — but unless she's growling or hissing she probably just wants to play. Don't be afraid, she means no harm. Instead, encourage her to play in an appropriate way that makes a toy the object of her attention rather than you.

Too much attention can also cause aggression; your kitty will tell you when she wants to be petted or held and what she wants you to do. If she nips or lightly bites, flattens her ears, or twitches her tail, she's telling you to stop. Realizing when and how much affection she wants can prevent this kind of aggression.

Aggression can occur at any time in your cat's life. Once a physical disorder is ruled out, you can minimize the problem by avoiding situations that may bring on the aggressive behavior.

The information for *Feline Forum* has been prepared by the Cornell Feline Health Center, Cornell College of Veterinary Medicine, Ithaca, NY.
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Play aggression is often seen through stalking. When you move under the covers or make the bed, the cat waits in ambush and then quickly and silently runs towards you. She may look frightening and may grab you with her paws and bite — but unless she's growling or hissing she probably just wants to play. Don't be afraid, she means no harm. Instead, encourage her to play in an appropriate way that makes a toy the object of her attention rather than you.

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