




 PURINA®
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CARING FOR YOUR OLDER CAT

A guide for cat owners from Purina® Pro Plan
Veterinary Diets®



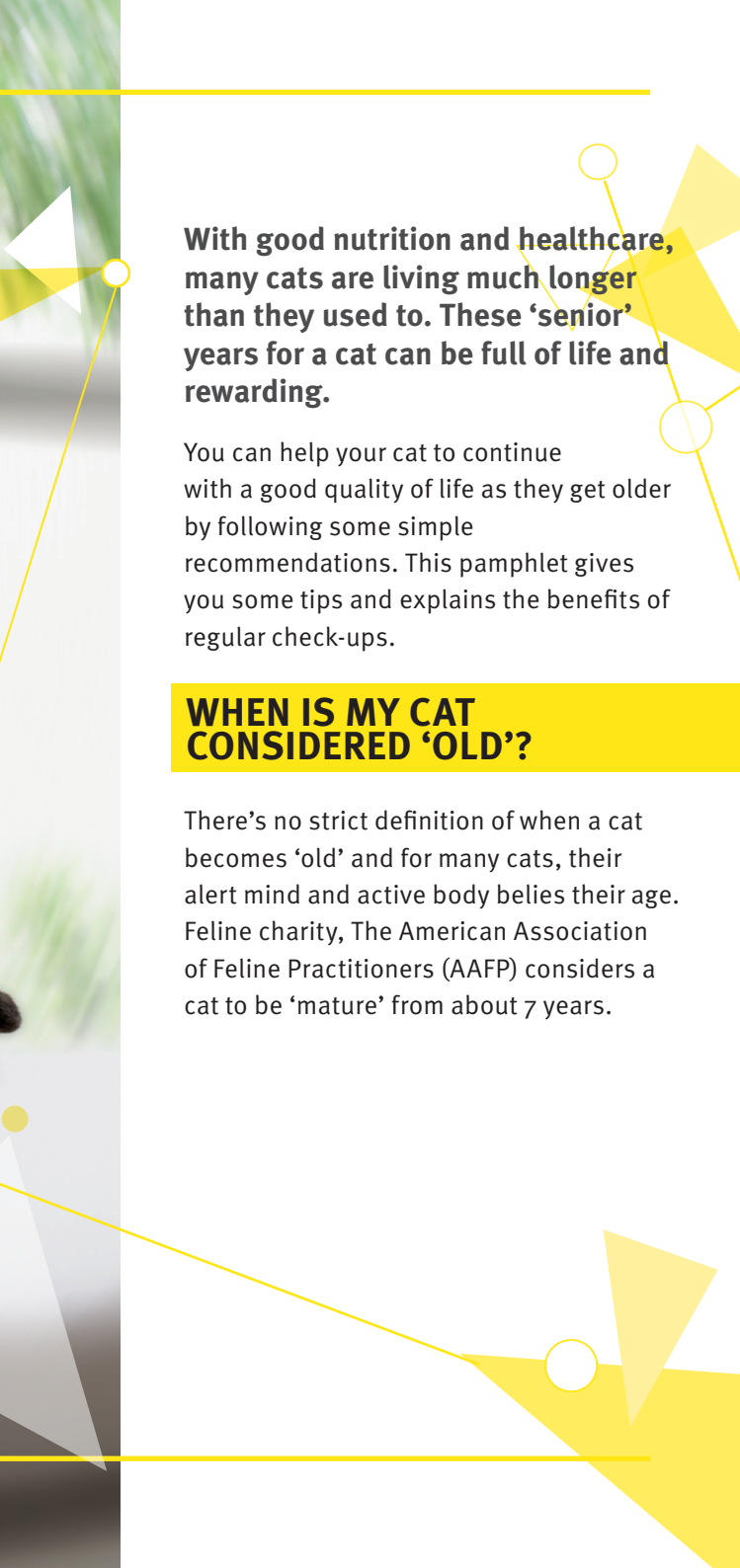


With good nutrition and healthcare, many cats are living much longer than they used to. These ‘senior’ years for a cat can be full of life and rewarding.

You can help your cat to continue with a good quality of life as they get older by following some simple recommendations. This pamphlet gives you some tips and explains the benefits of regular check-ups.

WHEN IS MY CAT CONSIDERED ‘OLD’?

There’s no strict definition of when a cat becomes ‘old’ and for many cats, their alert mind and active body belies their age. Feline charity, The American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) considers a cat to be ‘mature’ from about 7 years.



WHAT CHANGES MIGHT I SEE AS MY CAT GETS OLDER?

Just as with people, physiological changes affect your cat as they age. These can be subtle in onset, but some of the signs you might see include:

- Increased time spent sleeping
- Less time spent in activities
- A decrease in appetite or an increased fussiness around food
- A change in their coat or in grooming habits
- Nervousness or insecurity
- Changes in their social behaviour – with you, others in the home, or other animals
- Increased ‘chattiness’ or a change in vocalisation

You may also observe signs that might be as a result of illness, such as increased drinking, a decrease in mobility, or perhaps irritability. Your vet will help you to distinguish between normal aging behaviour and signs that might indicate that something else is going on.

HOW COULD HEALTHCARE SCREENING HELP MY OLDER CAT?

Routine health screening of your older cat can help to pick up any abnormalities earlier and allow you to make any modifications to your cat's lifestyle or care. Cats are very good at disguising signs of illness. Health screening can help your cat to maintain a good quality of life as they get older, and sometimes extend your cat's life.



WHAT DOES MY CAT NEED AS IT GETS OLDER?

There are a few things that you can do to help your cat as they age:

REGULAR VET VISITS

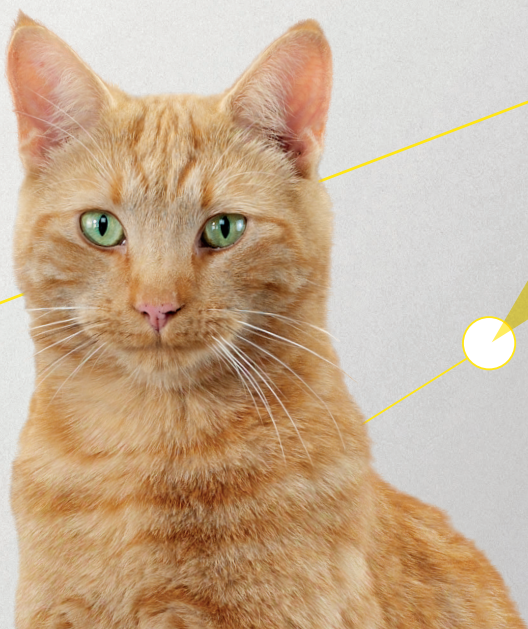
Regular visits to the vet will benefit your pet by giving you the opportunity to discuss any changes that you have seen with your cat. Often, particularly in cats, very subtle changes can be very significant. Certain conditions are common in older cats, such as kidney disease and an overactive thyroid. Regular examinations can help identify these early.

Check-ups may include a physical examination, weight check (where changes can be picked up quickly), muscle and body condition check, and sometimes, blood pressure and urine or blood checks. Ask your vet what would be most appropriate for your cat. They can make a recommendation specifically for your cat based on their initial examination and also on your pet's history.

The American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) recommends that healthy, older cats should have regular health checks:

Every
6 months

Cats that have known health conditions may be recommended to visit more often. Again, your vet will be able to guide you.





HOW ELSE MAY I HELP MY OLDER CAT?

Accommodating hearing or sight loss

If your pet has started to ignore you, or is less aware of their surroundings, it's important to bring them to your vet so that they can try to find out what's going on and if they can treat it. Hearing or sight loss is common in old age, so try to avoid sudden loud noises or movements to avoid startling your pet.

HOW ELSE CAN I HELP MY ELDERLY CAT?

Grooming

At least once a week, take some minutes to groom your cat – if they are comfortable with it. Older cats groom less efficiently, and hair can become matted – which can lead to skin problems. A gentle brush and fine comb will help to keep matts at bay – go softly over any bony bits. Wiping around their eyes, nose and bottom with some moist cotton wool will also help keep them clean and fresh.



Nail Trimming

You might have noticed your cat's nails getting longer and thicker as they age. This is because they are less able to retract them as they get older. Sometimes this may cause them to get caught in clothing or furniture and they might even overgrow and embed into the footpads. Check them weekly and gently trim them if necessary. Your vet or veterinary technician will be able to show you how.



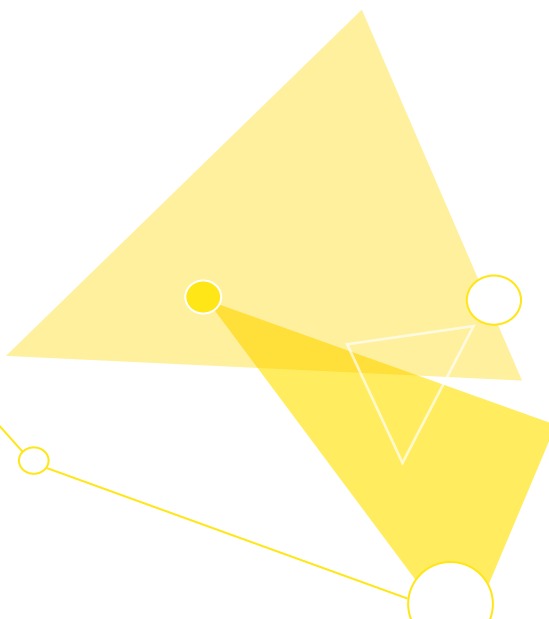


Hairballs

Slower digestive tracts in older animals can sometimes cause problems, and hairballs in cats can lead to vomiting or constipation; a common problem in older cats. There are foods and supplements that can help, and regular grooming will cut down on the amount of hair that they ingest.

Encourage drinking

As they get older, cats are vulnerable to dehydration. You should encourage drinking by having several sources of water available in easy to reach places. The water should be kept fresh and clean. Try different bowls to see what your cat likes best, some cats love water fountains.



Consider a 'senior' food

'Mature' cats, aged 7-10 years, are commonly prone to weight gain and foods with a reduced calorie content can help to keep weight gain at bay. As they transition into their more senior years, many cats then struggle to maintain their weight. A more calorific food may then be required.

There are no standardized requirements for diets marketed to senior cats, therefore it is important to discuss nutrition with your veterinarian so that they can make the best recommendation for your pet. Some senior diets include the addition of antioxidants to support immune function, essential fatty acids to support a healthy skin and coat, and higher quality protein to support muscles which lose condition with age. Sometimes tasty, softer food will also help to encourage appetite resulting from a decreased sense of smell.

Regular check-ups with your vet will help to keep your cat comfortable and happy as they age. Ask today about a senior check for your pet.

Accessible bedding and bowls

Cats can develop stiffness due to arthritis as they get older. This may be hard to spot as cats are masters of disguise. You might notice that they are avoiding stairs or starting to sleep in unusual places – because they're not able to climb up to their usual favourite spots. Make some steps or ramps to help them and give them some bedding that's easily accessible on every floor of your house. Ensure they can easily reach their food and water dishes to obtain the food and hydration they need.

How do I find out more?
The American Association of
Feline Practitioners (AAFP):
<https://catvets.com/>





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