

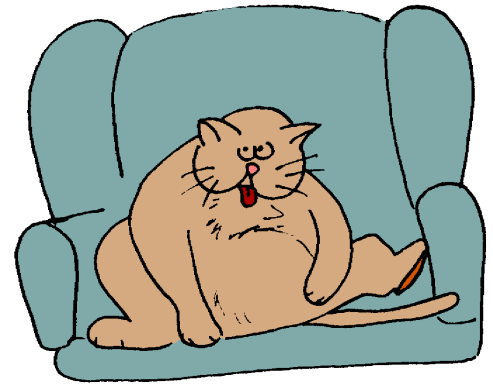
WEIGHT CONTROL AND EXERCISE FOR CATS



Over half the cats we see every year are overweight, many extremely so. Being overweight has some serious consequences for cats, just as it does for people. In fact, the average life-span of an obese pet is years shorter than that of pets that stay slim and trim.

Weight related diseases include arthritis, heart disease, diabetes, liver disease, bladder problems and many types of cancer.

Most of our house pets are not very active. Not only are many of them overweight but they also don't get enough exercise. This is bad for their health and contributes to behavior problems – a cat that is bored and inactive is more likely to be destructive or aggressive.



So what should you do to prevent these problems?

Some cats are better at burning calories than others but for most cats the recommended feeding amounts on cat food bags are way too generous. If you are feeding a good quality food your cat can eat much less than the label says and still get all the nutrients necessary for good health. Feed only what your pet needs to maintain a healthy weight. For average sized adult female cats this is usually about 1/4 cup twice a day, with males needing about 1/3 of a cup twice a day.

You should be able to easily feel your cat's ribs and backbone under his skin. If there is lots of padding over the ribs your cat is probably overweight. You should be able to see his waist - his body should curve up behind his ribs if you are looking at him from the side. Looking down from above you should also see a pronounced narrowing of the body behind the ribs. Also look for bulges over the hips or a potbelly, common places for excess pounds to show up. (Many cats have a pouch of fat and skin between the back legs, even if they are not overweight. This is not the same as an enlarged "pot belly".)

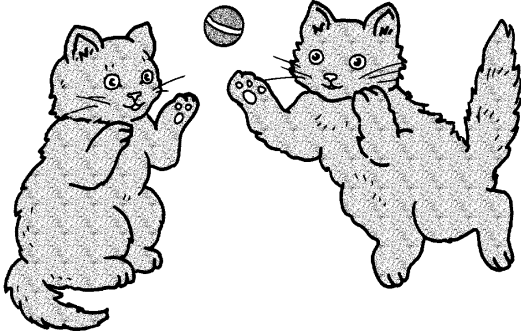
On the other hand, if your pet's ribs or backbone are visible, or very pronounced when you run your hand across them, your pet may be too thin.

Choose a good quality pet food, which fits your pet's lifestyle. If your pet is a couch potato, he needs a low calorie food.

Limit treats, snacks and table food. It doesn't take many extras to tip the scales. Avoid processed treats that are loaded with fat and salt. If you must feed treats, give bits of the pet's regular food. Canned food is OK in small amounts, but the more moist food you feed, the faster plaque and tartar will build up on the teeth.

Make sure your cat gets the exercise he needs. If he tends to be lazy, get him up and moving with a game of chase the string or roll the wad of paper. How often does your cat really cut loose and RUN? Probably not often enough.

If your cat is already overweight he'll need an exercise program and/or a restricted calorie diet. Most "lite" foods available in supermarkets are only about 10-15% less in calories than regular food. If you feed one of these, and give the same amount of food as you fed of the regular non-diet food, your pet may stop gaining weight, but he probably won't lose any. To achieve a reasonable amount of weight loss in a reasonable



amount of time you need to cut back by 25-30%. The easiest way to achieve this is to feed a prescription weight loss diet. These foods are low in fat and calories, so you can feed an amount large enough to keep your pet feeling full, while still achieving weight loss.

The first step is to measure how much you are feeding per day. Most cat owners simply fill the bowl. Given unlimited access to food, it's no wonder pets get too fat! Start by

measuring how many cups of food you put in the bowl over the course of a week. Then divide by seven to get the amount fed per day (usually 1/2 to one cup). Now you need to feed a smaller amount of food. If your cat is eating a cup of food per day, you might want to only give him 3/4 of a cup. Divide this amount into two or three daily feedings. Cats are natural nibblers and will do better on several small meals a day rather than one large one.

If you switch to a store brand reducing diet you won't need to cut back as much on the amount you feed as if you stay with a regular maintenance food. If you feed a prescription reducing diet you may not need to cut back at all in amount, as some of these foods are high in bulk and fiber. Either way it's very important to measure the amount you feed! That lets us adjust the amount fed as the cat loses weight.

Most pets become less active with age, so their calorie needs often go down as they get older. Decrease their food accordingly. Most senior pets benefit from a food made for older pets that is lower in fat and salt. On the other hand, some elderly cats become too thin. Low fat senior diets are not necessarily a good choice for thin pets.

Please let us know what we can do to help you keep your pet in the peak of health. We welcome you anytime to put your pet on our scale or ask our opinion on his current weight or weight loss goals.

limit snacks

exercise

appropriate diet

measure food