



What to Feed Your New Kitten

Nutrition is a very important part of your pet's life but with all the options that are out there, it can be hard to know what is best for your new kitten. Your breeder/the shelter where you purchased your kitten may have a specific recommendation on food as well as friends, family, co-workers, etc! Plus, it is not so easy to read the ingredients on cat food and know what might be best. Below are some important tips on nutrition.

Switching foods

First and foremost, it is very important that if you are changing or introducing foods that you do this slowly. Most pets need at least 1-2 weeks to transition from an old food to a new food (some sensitive pets may even need this when transitioning from one bag of the *same* food to another!). To do this, think of it in fractions. Initially, you want to use most of the old food and just a few kibbles of the new food. Try this for a couple of days and if there has been no intestinal upset, then slowly add more of the new food and take away some of the old food. If at any point during the transition your pet has intestinal upset (vomiting and/or diarrhea), please call our hospital right away.

Good Quality Foods

Although there is a lot of advertising of 'quality' pet foods on TV and in magazines, just because the company makes the food look nutritious does not necessarily mean that it is. Unfortunately, pet food companies can make even lower quality foods look like everything your pet could possibly need or want. Below is a website that can be helpful in finding the right food for your pet - it includes controversial ingredients and a grading system to determine which foods are lower and higher in quality - you may be surprised at what you find on this website: <http://truthaboutpetfood.com>. Two other websites specific to cat nutrition are: catinfo.org and feline-nutrition.org. Additionally, there is a website called Dog Food Advisor and many other higher quality foods for dogs have a similar quality of food for cats.

Make sure that when you use this website you have a few options when you go to the store. The food you are looking for may be unavailable or not within your budget so having options is great! Many of the lower quality pet foods are found in grocery stores but businesses like Guy's Farm and Yard, Menard's Agway, and Pet Food Warehouse all have higher quality options for you and your pet.

Snacks

You might be surprised at the amount of not only calories but sugars that are present in many commercial cat treats. With that said, think of some healthy alternatives - many pets like very small pieces of bland meat (no more than a teaspoon at a time). You may be surprised to learn that many cats are lactose intolerant, so they should not have milk, cheese, yogurt, etc. Like with food transitions, make sure you start any treat in small amounts and increase slowly over time. Also, treats should be less than 10% of the daily calories that your pet consumes.

Please feel free to discuss foods, transitioning diets, treats and any other food questions with a staff or veterinarian here at the hospital - we are happy to help!