

Downers Grove Animal Hospital & Bird Clinic, P.C.

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Kitten Behavior

By nature, cats are inquisitive and playful, which frequently gets them into trouble. Cat-proofing your home is important to prevent accidents and illness.

TIPS FOR KEEPING YOUR CAT SAFE:

- Physical punishment is the least effective method for training cats. Do not discipline your kitten by hitting or striking him. This will only frighten or anger him, and may lead to biting and clawing. Keep a squirt gun or bottle available. A squirt of water in the face doesn't hurt him but deters most kittens from doing things they shouldn't.
- Spend lots of time playing with your pet. Drag a string around the house or tie an object to a string on a pole and bounce it around. Do not play with him by wiggling your fingers or toes as this only encourages biting.
- Never force your kitten to stay in your lap if he wants to get down. Do not grab at him or scare him. Rough play also encourages aggression. Play gently using a toy, not your fingers.
- Confine your pet to one room that has no plants or dangerous objects when you aren't home. Swallowing small objects is very common in kittens and cats. Beware of things such as rubber bands, pencil erasers, ear plugs, needles and thread, small toys, metal objects such as paper clips, fabric scraps, earrings, etc. Anything smaller than 1" diameter can potentially be swallowed and needs to be kept out of your kitten's reach. Don't give him string or yarn to play with! These are among the most common and deadliest of causes for intestinal obstructions.
- Provide at least one scratching post for your kitten to use. Even declawed cats may like to stretch and knead their paws. Rubbing catnip on the scratching post will encourage its use. Keep the post in a place where your pet spends a lot of time, and reward him with praise or a treat when he uses his scratching post. Cats usually prefer a larger post that they can climb up and down. Use your squirt bottle if you see him scratching in inappropriate places.
- Aluminum foil can be placed around your plant pots and counter tops or tables, especially when you can't be home to use the squirt bottle! Cats don't like shiny, noisy foil and will generally avoid it. Many types of plants are poisonous to your cat, so it's best to keep them all out of reach. Double-sided sticky tape works well to deter kittens from couches and chairs.
- Be aware that the laundry room and kitchen contain many things that can be toxic to your pet when licked off the paws after walking through it. Laundry soap and bleach are prime examples. Many cats die each year after exploring the washing machine, taking a nap in the dryer, or jumping on or into a hot stove or oven. Cats are also very good at learning how to open cabinet doors.
- A collar and ID tag ensures your pet can be identified if he escapes outside. Use breakaway collars to prevent choking. Microchips are now available to permanently identify escaped pets.
- Be sure that the litter pan is accessible, in a quiet place, and changed frequently. If your house is large, it is best to have more than one box placed in convenient areas. It is recommended that there be one more litter pan than cats in multicat households. Avoid heavily scented litter-cats don't like perfume. Avoid changing brands of litter. Changing the litter every day is much healthier than using "scoopable" litters. Be sure to remove clumps daily if "scoopable" litter is used. Any time your pet eliminates outside the litter box, be sure to have him checked for a medical problem.