



## What should I feed my kitten?

An article by dvm360 in association with Kathryn Primm, DVM, and Joe Bartges, DVM, PhD, DACVIM, DACVN, and modified for Evergreen Veterinary Hospital

Having a new kitten is a lot of fun! You love your new best friend and want what is best for them. You want to give them the best foundation to grow and thrive, and then you face the pet food aisle at the pet or grocery store. Dr. Joe Bartget, a veterinary internal medicine specialist and nutritionist, answers some common nutrition questions for kitten owners.

### *First things first*

Cats are obligate carnivores, which means that their bodies lack the ability to create certain compounds and they must get them directly from their diet. Cats need important compounds found only in meat, so your kitten cannot be a vegetarian. It is also important that your kitten eat a diet that is labeled for “growth” or at least says “all stages of life”.

### *Should I give my kitten vitamins?*

It is especially important that kittens have what they need while they are growing, and high-quality diets should provide all the nutrients needed, making vitamin supplements unnecessary. In fact, giving supplements to growing animals can be a bad idea. Excessive or abnormal mineral balance can affect normal growth. Ask your veterinary team for our favorite kitten food brands and remember – the best brands might not be the most expensive or the most advertised brands!

### *How much do I feed my kitten?*

Your kitten needs calories during growth, but you do not want to begin a trend toward obesity. Your veterinary team can help you figure out if your kitten is growing appropriately or is overweight and can give you an accurate feeding guide. One great way to feed is the measure the amount of food offered and setting up mealtimes (instead of free feedings) so that your kitten does not overeat or snack excessively from boredom. Cats may naturally want to hunt for food, and puzzle feeders or multiple feeding sites can be helpful.

### *Is some vomiting and diarrhea normal for kittens?*

Even if your kitten feels great, they should not be throwing up or having loose stool. Kittens with these issues need to be evaluated right away. There are lots of possible causes for these problems, and your veterinary team are the only ones who can diagnose and treat them.



*Should I feed my kitten a homemade or raw diet?*

Raw diets are in the news, but raw and homemade diets are risky for young animals. The risks for nutrient imbalance and infectious disease are too high with these foods during such a critical phase of growth.

The best advice for having your kitten's nutritional needs met is to take advantage of asking the Evergreen Veterinary Team lots of questions about your kitten's diet!