



TOLLESON ANIMAL CLINIC

[A Guide to Maintaining Good Health in your Kitten's First Year](#)

If you haven't already noticed, you are embarking on a fun and occasionally trying journey. You are about to discover your kitten's personality and help to shape the cat they are going to become. We strongly recommend that you and your family participate in interacting and playing with your kitten daily.

Our goal here at Tolleson Animal Clinic is to help maintain a healthy pet throughout their life. The following is a guideline through the first year of health exams, vaccines, deworming, heartworm prevention, flea control, neutering, and general health care.

1) Average Preventative and Vaccination Schedule

We recommend vaccinating your kitten every 3-4 weeks, starting between 6-8 weeks old, until they're at least 16 weeks old.

Average Age	Preventative Care	Vaccinations
6-8 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Examination, Fecal Analysis, start Flea and Tick Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Distemper combo #1
9-11 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Examination, Continue Flea and Tick Prevention monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Distemper combo #2
12-14 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Examination, Feline Leukemia/Aids Test, Continue Flea and Tick Prevention monthly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Distemper combo #3, Feline Leukemia #1
15-17 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Examination, Fecal Analysis, Flea and Tick Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Final Distemper combo, Feline Leukemia #2, and Rabies 1 year
6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Schedule Castration or Spay, Microchip	
15 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Examination, Fecal Analysis, Feline Leukemia/Aids Test	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Distemper combo 3-year, Rabies annual, Leukemia annually

After looking through the above table, I am sure the question on your mind is why does my kitten need so many vaccinations? The first reason is initially, kittens are born with some protection against disease called maternal antibodies, from the mothers. After this, the kitten needs to make its own antibodies, which occurs in 2 ways; contracting the disease (getting sick) or preferably, through vaccinations. Unfortunately, the same maternal antibodies that protect the kitten can also block the vaccination from working completely. The issue with this is that there is no known "window" of opportunity for when the maternal antibodies are low enough for the vaccine to work completely, but before the kitten is at risk of contracting disease. The second reason is with each "booster"



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vaccine, the body develops more memory cells or immunity to the disease, forming a stronger immune response, and thus protection. All cells have a limited life span and therefore we booster at recommended intervals to maintain full protection. During your kitten's vaccination series, we do not recommend they go out into public spaces: no outside exploration, walks, pet stores, etc. This is because your kitten is still vulnerable to the viruses and may contract them during that time. 2 weeks after their last vaccine, they should be protected and can be taken out. Please keep in mind, cats are considered an invasive species. They should be kept indoors to help protect the bird population from unnecessary hunting. They can go outdoors on a leash (you'd be surprised how many cats take to one!) or in a catio. They are more than welcome to visit the homes of family or friends that, if they have pets, the pets are fully vaccinated and healthy. This would help with socialization and exploring a new environment.

[Distemper Combo \(FVRCP\)](#): This vaccine is a 3 in 1. It protects against the viruses rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, and panleukopenia. These are **very contagious** upper respiratory viruses.

[Leukemia \(FeLV\)](#): This vaccine helps protect against feline leukemia. FeLV is a contagious retrovirus that suppresses a cat's immune system. The virus can result in secondary infections and some forms of cancer, which can be life-threatening. FeLV is spread between cats through saliva, blood, nasal secretions, urine, or feces. It can be transmitted via bite wounds, deep scratches, or (more rarely) behaviors such as sharing food or water bowls, using the same litter box, or engaging in mutual grooming. In addition, mother cats can pass it to their kittens while they are developing in the womb or through their milk when nursing.

FeLV can affect cats of any age or breed. However, it is a particular concern for cats who roam outside or felines in shelters and other group environments where they can encounter potentially infected cats.

[Rabies](#): This vaccine helps protect against the rabies virus. Rabies is typically transmitted from wildlife. **This virus is also zoonotic** - meaning it can be transmitted to humans and other species.

2) Fecal Analysis and Deworming

Kittens are often born with worms in their gastrointestinal tract, which came from their mothers, but also are picked up from fleas, other pets, their environment, and wildlife. Some of these worms can cause serious illness (vomiting, diarrhea, weight loss, anemia, poor growth), others are very contagious to their housemates and to their owners. For this reason, we strongly recommend checking a fecal sample for internal parasites at your earliest convenience and then rechecking a few months later. A deworming protocol would be initiated if the fecal analysis came back positive for worms. The most common way to prevent worms in your cat is to treat with a monthly flea and tick preventative such as Revolution Plus, which has a broad-spectrum deworming agent in it.



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3) Flea and Tick Control

Fleas and ticks are pesky insects in the environment waiting for your cat. They can transmit disease and also expose you to diseases such as bartonella and mycoplasma. Thankfully, we are able to provide some protection for you and your pet. We recommend year-round flea and tick treatment because, contrary to popular belief, they don't hibernate. The product we provide in hospital is Credelio. We have more options available in our online pharmacy. We'd be happy to help set up your account and auto-ship the preventative to you at your desired interval.

4) Feline Leukemia/Aids/Heartworm Testing

These 3 diseases are potentially fatal diseases in cats. Feline leukemia and aids are viruses that affect your cat's immune system potentially shortening their life span or causing other disease processes to occur. These are very contagious to other cats through saliva (bite wounds mainly) and can be transmitted from the mother to the kittens. There is no cure once infected, but we can support them the best way we know how if they are positive.

Heartworm is from a mosquito bite where they inject microfilaria (baby heartworms) into their bloodstream, then they mature in the vessels of the heart and lungs resulting in heart disease. Credelio treats fleas, ticks, and some common intestinal parasites. We have more options available in our online pharmacy. We'd be happy to help set up your account and auto-ship the preventative to you at your desired interval. This should be started at 8 weeks of age and continued monthly. Annual blood testing for these diseases is recommended for cats that go outdoors in any way.

5) Spay & Neuter

We strongly recommend that you have your kitten neutered. Having your cat spayed before her first heat (which occurs between 6-8 months of age) decreases the likelihood of her developing breast cancer by 80%. After her first heat but before the second reduces the chance by about 50%. Serious conditions such as a pyometra (uterine infection), uterine, or ovarian cancer are also eliminated. Castration of a male cat is recommended as soon as 6 months of age. This procedure eliminates potential testicular cancer and reduces the odds of behavior issues. Castrating will commonly decrease sexual, aggressive, and marking behaviors thus reducing chances of fighting with other cats and obtaining an infection with feline leukemia or aids. For 10-14 days after the surgery, we recommend your cat wear an e-collar (cone of shame) so they don't lick and potentially open up their incision site. We have some available to purchase or you can bring your own. It just needs to come past their nose 1" to 2". Other products available are inflatable donuts and post surgery suits. They are available for purchase at pet stores or online. We offer Phovia, which is a LED light treatment. This treatment reduces the healing time up to 50%. It's great for those rambunctious cats that have two speeds: sleep and run. 😊

6) Microchipping

Implanting a Home Again microchip in your pet is recommended. This is placed under the skin between the shoulder blades. If your cat were to ever become lost or injured, a veterinary clinic or shelter would be able to scan them and identify the personal identification code that is associated with your contact information. This can be performed anytime, most commonly at the time of neutering. It is your responsibility to update your contact information for your pet's microchip. It is important to keep the information up to date just in case your pet gets out and picked up. The first



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thing people think of when they see a stray is to check for a chip. If that's the first thing they think of, it is wise to microchip your pet and keep the information up to date.

7) Handling and Training

Work with your kitten every day to get them used to being handled. Play with their feet, ears, mouth, pinch their skin, hold them in weird positions, hold them still standing and laying down, etc. Get them used to as much manipulation as you can and have multiple people do it. This allows your kitten to become used to being worked with and more tolerant of treatments or procedures that need to be done such as vaccines, nail trims, blood draws, teeth brushing, ear cleaning, and so on.

Believe it or not, you can actually train your cat! There are several great cat training videos on the internet available to you. The key to training is consistency. Everyone in the household needs to be consistent with the training. Mixed messages often result in delayed and even poor training.

8) Grooming

Keeping your pet well-groomed is important for their health and comfort. You don't need to do it perfectly, but regular brushing and nail trimming will help prevent mats, tangles, and other problems.

Brush your pet's coat daily. This will help remove loose hair and dirt, and prevent mats from forming. Use a brush that is designed for your pet's fur type.

If you find mats, **don't** try to cut them out with scissors. This could cut your pet's skin and cause an infection. Instead, take your pet to a groomer or use grooming clippers.

Trim your pet's nails regularly. This will help prevent them from growing too long and curling into their paw pads, which can be painful and cause an infection. You can also provide your cat with scratching posts to help them keep their nails trimmed naturally.

If you're not comfortable grooming your pet yourself, you can always take them to a professional groomer. They will have the experience and tools to keep your pet looking and feeling their best.

Here are some additional tips for grooming your pet:

- Start grooming your pet when they are young, so they get used to it.
- Make grooming a positive experience for your pet by being gentle and patient.
- Use a comfortable grooming table or surface.
- Reward your pet with treats and praise after grooming.

By following these tips, you can help keep your pet looking and feeling their best.

Here are some additional tips for choosing a scratching post for your cat:

- Make sure the post is the right size for your cat. It should be tall enough for them to stand up and stretch, and wide enough for them to comfortably scratch.
- Choose a post that is made from a material that your cat likes to scratch. Some cats prefer sisal, while others prefer cardboard or carpet.



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- Place the post in a location where your cat will be likely to use it. Avoid placing it near their food or water bowls, as they may not want to scratch near their food.
- You can also try adding a catnip toy to the post to make it more appealing to your cat.

With a little trial and error, you should be able to find the perfect scratching post for your cat.

9) Nutrition

What should you feed your pet? There are a lot of differing opinions on this topic. It boils down to: Whatever your pet is thriving on. You don't need to break the bank on a boutique brand because marketing has convinced you that's what your pet needs. Costco brand food is good food. Purina, Pedigree, and Iams are good foods as well. Prescription diets, such as Hill's and Royal Canin are great foods. They have a veterinary nutritionist on staff and have several diets to meet the needs of different ailments. We don't recommend grain free food. It has been linked to DCM- Dilated Cardiomyopathy.

If you want to make your pet's food, great! We recommend visiting [Balanceit.com](https://balanceit.com) to ensure you're meeting the nutritional requirements for your pet. The site was created and is run by a veterinary nutritionist. She has information on what your pet's dietary requirements are and recipes for you to follow.

Just Food For Dogs is also a great resource for homemade foods. They have food that is already prepared and a section that allows you to create recipes. While it's currently more focused on dog food, there are a few cat options available.

10) Websites

Here are some good resources for additional information. There are more available on our website:

<https://indoorpet.osu.edu/cats>

<https://healthyhabitsforpets.com/>

<https://www.pawlicy.com/>

<https://www.petpoisonhelpline.com/>

<https://veterinarypartner.vin.com/>

<https://linktr.ee/drradostacatresources>

Veterinary Nutritionists

- Balance It: www.balance.it
- Tufts University: <https://vetnutrition.tufts.edu/>
 - <https://vetnutrition.tufts.edu/petfoodology/>
- Weeth Nutrition: <http://www.weethnutrition.com/>
- The Pet Oncologist (Nutrition for pets with cancer):
<https://www.thepetoncologist.com/blog/nutrition-in-pets-with-cancer>
- WSAVA: <https://wsava.org/global-guidelines/global-nutrition-guidelines/>



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EMERGENCY INSTRUCTIONS

Did your dog or cat just eat something poisonous? Call your veterinarian or Pet Poison Helpline® at 855-764-7661 for help immediately! The sooner a dog poisoning or cat poisoning is diagnosed, the easier, less expensive, and safer it is for your pet to get treated!

What to do if your dog or cat is poisoned:

- Remove your pet from the area.
- Check to make sure your pet is safe: breathing and acting normally.
- Do NOT give any home antidotes.
- Do NOT induce vomiting without consulting a vet or Pet Poison Helpline®.
- Call Pet Poison Helpline® at 855-764-7661.
- If veterinary attention is necessary, contact your veterinarian or emergency veterinary clinic immediately.

Detailed Instructions:

- Immediately remove your pet from the area, and make sure no other pets (or kids!) are exposed to this area. Safely remove any remaining poisonous material from their reach.
- Check to make sure your pet is breathing normally and acting fine otherwise.
- Collect a sample of the material, along with the packaging, vial, or container, and save it – you will need all that information when you talk to your veterinarian or to a Pet Poison Helpline® expert.
- Do NOT give your dog any milk, food, salt, oil, or any other home remedies! Also, never inducing vomiting without talking to your veterinarian or Pet Poison Helpline® – it may actually be detrimental or contraindicated to induce vomiting!
- Don't give hydrogen peroxide to your pet without checking with a vet or with Pet Poison Helpline® first. For you cat lovers, hydrogen peroxide doesn't work well to induce vomiting (it just causes massive foaming and salivating instead!), and stronger veterinary prescription medications are necessary to get your cat to vomit up the poison Kitty ingested!
- Get help. Program your veterinarian phone number, along with an ER vet and Pet Poison Helpline®'s phone number (855-764-7661) in your cell phone so you will always have immediate access to help.
- Keep in mind that the prognosis is always better when a toxicity is reported immediately, so don't wait to see if your pet becomes symptomatic before calling for help. It's always less expensive, and safer for your pet for you to call immediately. Remember that there's a narrow window of time when we can decontaminate (induce vomiting or pump the stomach) in the case of a poisoning!