

Puppies and Kittens



My pet is too tiny for flea and tick products.

NOW WHAT?



When your puppy or kitten can't safely use preventive medications, you can still keep your new companion free of bothersome bugs.

When you want to protect your new puppy or kitten from parasites but they're still too small for preventive medications, you might wonder if fleas, ticks and other creepy crawlies are inevitable for your tiny friend. No way! Here are a few handy tips to keep the bugs at bay.

1. Manually check your pet for fleas.

When you don't have a preventive product to take care of external parasites such as fleas and ticks, you've got to be diligent. Check your pet daily for any new "friends" she might have picked up along the way. Most pet stores and veterinary offices offer flea combs—fine-toothed combs that can pick up and remove fleas from your pet's fur. The most common areas for fleas to hide out are the base of the tail and head, but comb over their entire body. If you do find fleas, dip the comb in alcohol, rinse it in the sink and dry it before continuing to work through the fur.

2. Don't forget about ticks.

Fleas are the most common pest pet owners deal with, but ticks can also be an issue, especially if you live in a

highly wooded area. Ticks can also be found with a flea comb but are more difficult to remove if they're already embedded in your pet's skin. Tick removers are available in stores, but you can also use a pair of household tweezers. Get as close to your pet's skin as you can so you remove the entire tick. Sometimes the head parts of the tick will remain embedded in your pet's skin and may cause irritation. If this doesn't resolve on its own, your veterinarian can help you remove the remaining tick parts.

3. Protect your home.

If you have a flea infestation in your home, it will be even harder to protect your pet from parasites without preventive products. Flea infestations can happen quickly and are often difficult to detect at first. If you're consistently seeing large numbers of fleas on your pet, this may be an indication your home is infested. You may also see flea bites on yourself, the most common area being the lower leg and ankle. Most pet stores and veterinarians carry fogger sprays and other products you can use to treat a flea infestation in your home. If these aren't available or you don't feel comfortable using them on your

own, you can have your home professionally treated.

4. Beware of the quick fix.

There are many over-the-counter products that claim to rid your pet of parasites, such as flea dips and baths. Beware! Veterinarians and their teams discourage the use of these products as they can be toxic to young, small animals.

After manually removing fleas and ticks, you can use a mild, diluted dish soap to wash the pet's skin as needed. Be sure to keep the pet warm afterward—he might be too small to regulate his own temperature.

5. Switch to preventive medications ASAP.

Once your pet reaches 8 weeks of age and 2 pounds or more, you can switch to an easier and more reliable method of prevention. There are multiple types of preventive products: topical, oral and collar. Each type has its own requirements for age and administration schedules, so ask your veterinarian how often to use them. Year-round use is the most effective way to protect your pet, so be sure to keep using them even in cold months.

YOUR VET: the new Google

There's a lot of conflicting and confusing vaccine information on the internet, and you may have a lot of questions and concerns. Don't worry, your veterinary team is here to help.

How do vaccines work?

Vaccines are like boot camp for the immune system: They train your pet's body to fight off infectious disease. The body can do that itself, but it takes several days for the immune system to respond. And in the meantime your pet can develop clinical signs of infection, which can vary from flu-like symptoms to life-threatening dehydration and bloody diarrhea.

Vaccines contain either killed or severely weakened bits of viruses or bacteria. They don't cause an infection, but the immune system still sees them as an invader and makes antibodies in response. The body retains a memory of these antibodies, and if your pet is ever exposed to the same infectious organism, the immune system makes antibodies lightning fast.

Core vs. non-core vaccines

You may have heard your veterinary team mention a lifestyle assessment or core versus non-core vaccines. Core vaccines are required to help protect the overall pet and human population. Non-core vaccines are recommended based on the risk of exposure to certain diseases, which we determine through a lifestyle assessment. Not all pets need every non-core vaccine. With vaccines, it's important to work with your veterinarian to tailor the vaccination recommendations so the pet is protected and you feel good.

What if my pet has a bad reaction?

Just like in human infants, vaccinations can make pets grumpy or out of



sorts for a day or two. This is because the immune system is busy making antibodies. Signs that the vaccine is doing its job include mild fever (your pet feels warm), mild loss of appetite, mild swelling at the injection site or mild lethargy. If the vaccine makes your pet sore at the injection site, call your veterinarian, who can prescribe an anti-inflammatory and may recommend medicine to make your pet feel better. If your pet is vomiting or develops hives, this indicates a more serious reaction. Call your veterinarian immediately.

In the past, vaccine technology was not as advanced, and some pets experienced adverse effects. Nowadays, vaccine safety is unparalleled. Vaccines are highly regulated to maintain safety, purity and effectiveness. And vaccine manufacturers guarantee the safety and effectiveness with a warranty that states if your

pet is properly vaccinated through a veterinarian and still develops illness, the company will pay for diagnosis and treatment—that's how much they believe in their products!

Some dogs and cats can have a rare but serious adverse reaction to any type of vaccination, making them poor candidates for vaccination. In this case, talk to your veterinarian about vaccine titers instead. Vaccine titers check the levels of antibodies in your pet's blood.

Do they cause autism?

A lot of people ask that! The British study that linked autism to vaccines was retracted many years ago because the study was proven false. For more information on vaccine safety, check out the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention resource center, which offers more details about the safety of vaccines.

Puppies



New pup predicament: "What's for dinner?"

Your puppy is your new best friend, and you want to give him the best foundation to grow and thrive. You certainly don't want to unknowingly contribute to anything that might be harmful or inadequate for him. This is where nutrition can come in! We all know that there are pet food brands and varieties stacked to the ceiling at pet stores and grocery stores, so how do you know what your puppy really needs as he grows?

Here are some common questions and a few important tips to help you put the perfect portion on your pup's plate, peppered with advice from Dr. Joe Bartges, a board-certified veterinary nutritionist and internist.

What's the most important thing to know about feeding a puppy?

Dogs are omnivores, like people. Puppies are trying to build healthy bones and muscles, as well as brains and organs. The right nutrition is critical for the building blocks for development. A balanced diet really does matter. It's important that your puppy get a diet that is labeled for "growth" or at least says "all stages of life." These diets have been shown to be adequate for growth for an average dog. But beware, your puppy might not be average, so be sure to ask your own veterinary team to weigh in about the ways your pup might be unique.

Should I give my puppy vitamins?

Since it's especially important that puppies have what they need while they are growing, be aware that

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 impact normal growth. Ask your veterinary team for their favorite food brands, and keep in mind that the best brands might not be the most expensive and rarely are the most advertised.

How much do I feed my puppy?

It's important that your puppy have adequate calories during growth, but you do not want to begin a trend toward obesity. Your veterinary team is the best resource for telling you if your puppy is growing appropriately or is overweight, and they can give you an accurate feeding guide. It's important that you measure the amount of food you offer and set up feeding times so that your puppy does not overeat or snack excessively from boredom. Puzzle feeders or multiple feeding sites can provide mental stimulation to help build your puppy's brain too.

Isn't some vomiting and diarrhea normal for puppies?

Even if your puppy feels great, he should not be throwing up or having loose stool. It's critical to have puppies with these issues evaluated right away by a veterinarian. There are lots of causes of these issues, and only a veterinarian can diagnose and treat them.

Should I feed my puppy a homemade or raw diet?

Raw diets are in the news, but Dr. Bartges thinks that raw and homemade diets are risky for young animals. He thinks that the risks for nutrient imbalance and infectious disease are too high during such a critical phase of growth.

The best advice for having your puppy's nutritional needs met is to take advantage of your veterinary team's treasure trove of information that they'd love to share with you.



Don't let boredom ruin your puppy's brain



Your new puppy likely won't need to fight for food in the wild. That means you'll need some fun, *err*, enrichment at home to keep your canine cutie happy, healthy and out of trouble (from boredom).

You've taken the first important step to giving your puppy a happy, healthy life by seeing your veterinarian, but medical and preventive care aren't the only things a new dog needs to thrive. The good news is, veterinary professionals are an excellent resource for ways to keep your puppy physically and mentally healthy.

Enrichment is fun!

Dog ancestors hunted and foraged. Of course, your puppy is dramatically different in many ways from canine ancestors, because domestic dogs have evolved along with humans, but his puppy brain still needs challenges. We call these challenges "enrichment."

Zoo veterinarians have known for a while now that their animals were much healthier if their environments offered enrichment. You can

see polar bears floating with frozen fish or tigers rolling enormous balls. Our dogs, like these animals in captivity, are born to evade predators and find food, but they have their needs met by us in our homes, so we have to give them other interesting things to focus on.

Some fun ways to create interest are toys and games. Even if it's as simple as hiding treats under blankets or going for a walk outside, anything that makes your pup move and think is good for her. You can hide treats in an empty paper towel roll with the ends twisted (just be prepared to clean up a little mess).

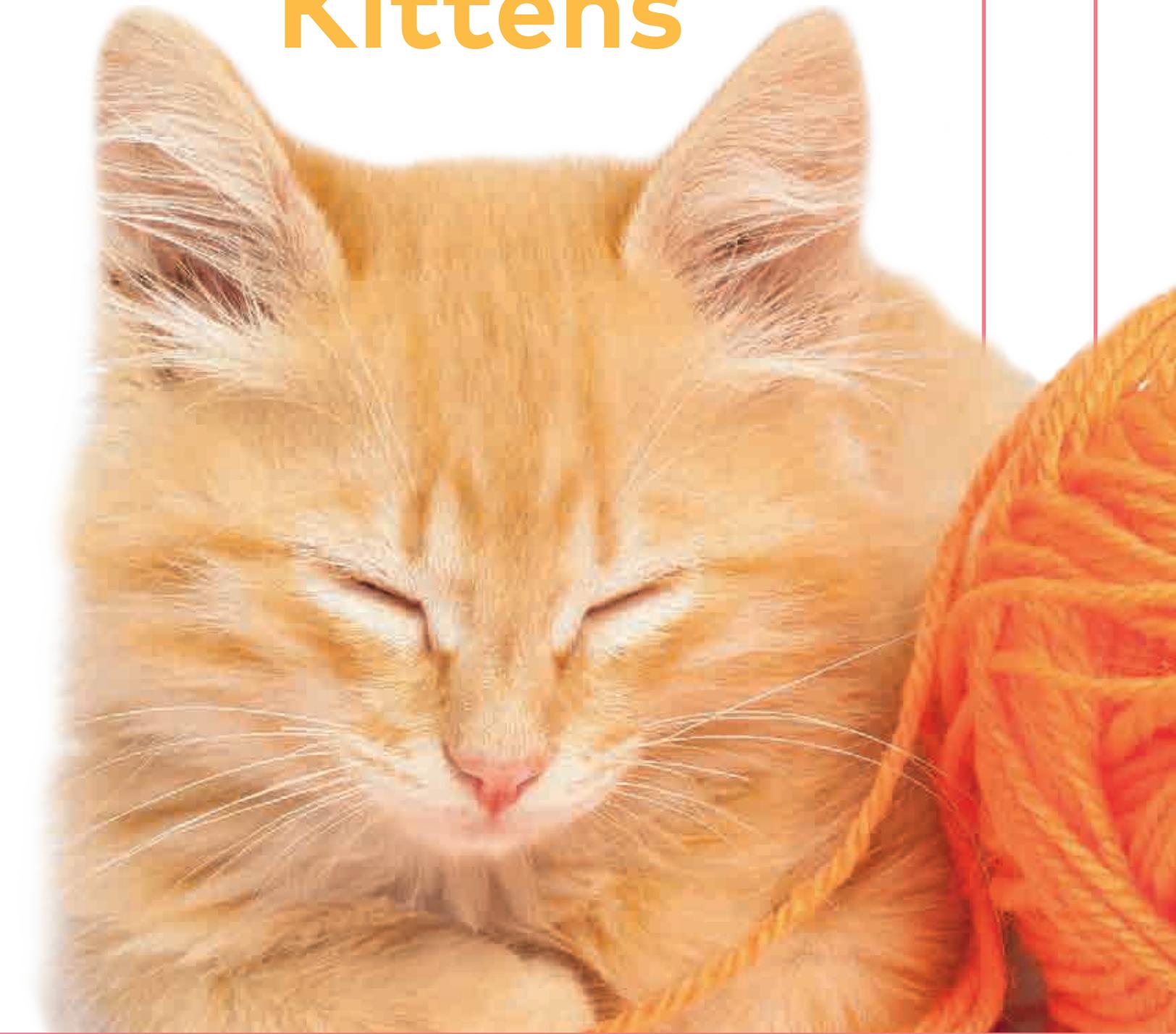
Food helps!

Some of the most fun enrichment toys for you to buy will dispense food rewards as puppies figure them out. They are novel and interesting and can help slow down your

puppy's eating habits too. There are high-tech toys that launch balls for puppies to chase. There are puzzles that puppies must decipher for a food reward. Activity mats are designed to entertain puppies too, with pockets to explore. Some of the mats have thick threads that dogs have to sniff and search through to find their reward. The more senses your dog engages for each activity, the better!

You can harness your pup's natural curiosity to help her learn and develop normally. Don't forget, anything that helps keeps your puppy entertained and busy—and not trying to figure out what your shoes taste like. Ask your veterinary team what their favorite enrichment items are or be creative to find ways for your puppy to seek you, find you and get active with you at home. It doesn't matter what you do, as long as you do it together.

Kittens



What should I feed my kitten?

A veterinary nutritionist weighs in on common kitten nutrition questions.

Having a new kitten is fun, but also a little intimidating. You love your new best friend and want what's best for her. You want to give her the best foundation to grow and thrive. And then you face the pet food aisle at the pet store or grocery store and don't know the right choice. So we asked a veterinary nutritionist to answer some common questions from kitten owners. Thanks, Dr. Joe Bartges!

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. The important compounds cats need are found only in meat, so your kitten cannot be a vegetarian. It's also important that your kitten eat a diet that's labeled for "growth" or at least says "all stages of life."

Should I give my kitten vitamins?

It's especially important that kittens have what they need while they're growing, and high-quality diets should provide all the nutrients needed. Vitamin supplements aren't necessary. 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 their 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 don't want to begin a trend toward obesity. Your veterinary team is the best resource to help you figure out if your kitten is growing appropriately or is overweight, and they can give you an accurate feeding guide. One great way to feed is measuring the amount of food offered and setting up meal times so your kitten doesn't overeat or snack excessively from boredom. Puzzle feeders or multiple feeding sites can be helpful for kittens, too. In the wild, cats hunt for food!

Is some vomiting and diarrhea normal for kittens?

Even if your kitten feels great, she should not be throwing up or having



loose stool. Take kittens with these issues to be evaluated right away by a veterinarian. There are lots of possible causes for these problems, and a veterinarian can diagnose and treat them.

Should I feed my kitten a homemade or raw diet?

Raw diets are in the news, but Dr. Bartges thinks that raw and/or homemade diets are risky for young animals. The risks for nutrient imbalance and infectious disease are too high during a kitten's growth. The best advice for meeting your kitten's nutritional needs? Take advantage of your veterinary team's treasure trove of information that they love sharing with you.

5 secrets to a well-adjusted new kitten

Socializing your sleek new bundle of joy is something you can do with your veterinarian's help. Start here.

Did you know that kittens learn and develop a big part of their adult personality by 16 weeks of age? It's true, and if you want a happy cat that takes life in a joyous stride, the clock is ticking. The positive (or negative) associations that young cats develop during this critical stage of brain development can last a lifetime ... for better or worse. So let's make it better!

Note: Don't force things! Make sure these exposures are done in a way that's comfortable for the kitten. Don't keep exposing a kitten to a new experience if the cat is scared. Talk to your veterinarian for guidance.

1. Handle your kitten—literally

Make a point to touch your kitten all over. Don't ever be forceful or push to the point of struggle. Just touch and hold gently and reward her acceptance with a special treat or gentle pet (kittens love to be stroked on both sides of their faces—maybe that's all the reward you'll need). Remember, over time, you'll need to be able to trim toe nails, clean ears and brush teeth. If your new kitten actually *enjoys* these rituals, life is better for you both.

2. Socialize with your kitten

Let your kitten meet people of all shapes, sizes and mannerisms to learn there's nothing to fear from people of all kinds. Introduce children, men and women, and even people with hats or costumes—Halloween comes around once a year. Don't forget the treats to make "scary" fun! Warn everyone to go slowly and speak softly, because kittens can be cautious by nature.

3. Keep the peace (of mind)

Let's face it, your cat is going to be sick or hurt at some point in his life, maybe starting with a spay or neuter surgery. You can make this better by training early not to fear the cat carrier. Buy one that you like too, because you need to keep it where you both can see it and think of it as an everyday thing. Leave it in the cat's favorite area with the door open, and hide treats inside or even feed

meals in there. Anything you can do to create a positive association with the carrier is a step in the right direction.

The best carriers are those with rigid sides and that open on the top as well as the front. That way, your kitten can feel safe in a hospital exam room while your veterinarian does a physical examination right inside the carrier. Your veterinary team will love you, and your kitten (and eventually grownup cat) won't be as freaked out when she needs to ride in her carrier for any reason.



These cats can totally roam free in their own cat car. If they're in yours, however, put them in a cat carrier for their safety and yours.

4. Adventure with your kitten

You and your cat will experience all life has to offer together, but the experiences won't be as fun if your cat is afraid or difficult to handle. Take your kitten wherever you can for exposure to new places. Visit your veterinarian on a day just for a visit—and some friendly treats. And don't forget to make her carrier into a cat nirvana, because that's the way you can keep travel with her the safest.

Science shows that it's easier for brains to remember bad experiences than good ones, so make sure your foundation for your kitten's brain is filled with terrific associations. You can avoid big problems in the future and, let's face it, handling and spending time with your kitten is a ton of fun!