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🏠 › Cat Care at Home › Senior Care › Top 10 Tips for Your Senior Cat

## Top 10 Tips for Your Senior Cat

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### **1. Schedule Regular Wellness Check-ups.**

- It's best to develop a close relationship with your cat's veterinarian while your cat is still healthy, so they get to know your cat and can detect subtle changes that may indicate a health condition or disease.
- Feline experts agree that cats need to visit their veterinarian more often as they age, usually about every 6 months, even if your cat appears healthy. While this may seem very frequent, please keep in mind that 6 months in cat years is roughly equivalent to 2 years for a person and a lot can change in that time.

### **2. Set Your Senior Cat Up for Success at the Veterinarian.**

- Reduce the stress of veterinary visits by getting your cat accustomed with his carrier in advance of the appointment and making the carrier cozy with soft, familiar bedding.
- Leave plenty of time to arrive so you are unhurried and calm.
- Prepare a list of questions or concerns to ask your veterinarian at your cat's regular check-up.

### **3. Know Your Cat's Habits and Pay Attention to Changes.**

- Cats are masters at hiding illness. Signs are often subtle and easily missed.
- If you notice a difference in behavior, such as sleeping more or hiding, don't ignore it! Speak up and tell your veterinarian.
- [It can be helpful to keep a diary to track of appetite, vomiting, and bowel movements.](#)
- Also, make sure to tell your veterinarian about any changes in your cat's behavior because you know your cat and his routines better than anyone.

### **4. Beware of Changes in Weight.**

- Both weight gain AND unplanned weight loss requires a visit to the veterinarian.
- Weight gain can predispose your cat to chronic diseases and a shortened life span.

- Weight loss in senior cats is usually a sign that something is amiss. Some of the most common diseases causing weight loss – hyperthyroidism, intestinal disease, and diabetes – occur with a normal or even increased appetite.
- Gradual changes in weight are hard to notice and monitoring your cat's weight is one of the most important reasons for routine examinations by your veterinarian.

### **5. They're Not Just "Slowing Down."**

- Slowing down is often a sign of underlying discomfort or pain.
- Arthritis, or degenerative joint disease, is present in the vast majority of older cats. Appropriate treatment can help them remain active and engaged.
- If your cat has difficulty going up or down steps, does not jump like he used to, or isn't using the litter box, talk to your veterinarian.

### **6. Look When You Scoop.**

- Are your cat's stools becoming softer, harder, or changing color? Is she not defecating daily? Constipation is a common, yet under recognized sign of dehydration in older cats, but if attended to early, your veterinarian can help get your kitty comfortable again.
- Has the amount of urine in the litter box changed? Increased urine output can signal some of the most common illnesses in elderly cats – from diabetes or an over active thyroid gland to kidney disease and high blood pressure.

### **7. Take a "Cat's Eye View" of the Litter box.**

- If your cat starts to miss the litter box and or have "accidents" around your house, there may be a medical issue causing your cat to house-soil.
- Urinary infections, constipation, arthritis, and muscle weakness are just a few of the reasons an older cat can develop litter box issues.
- Your veterinarian can evaluate the various medical issues and help you address home or environmental concerns that may be contributing to the change in your cat's behavior.
- Is the litter box easy for your elderly cat to get into (i.e. there isn't a high step into the box)?
- Is the litter box in a location that is not hard to access such as up or down stairs?
- Is the litter box in an area that is quiet and protected from other pets that may startle or frighten your older cat?
- Are you scooping and cleaning the litter box often enough to keep up with that increased urine output?
- Is the litter gentle on your senior kitty's paws?

### **8. Know That Your Cat's Needs Will Change.**

- Your household environment will likely need to have some adjustments made for your senior cat.

- As cats grow older, they often need extra padding and warmth for comfort, so be sure to provide soft sleeping places. Make their preferred sleeping and resting spots easily accessible by using stepping stools, ramps, and other ways to assist.

### **9. Know How Much Your Cat is Eating.**

- Nutritional needs change with chronic diseases and for some healthy older cats as well. Discuss nutrition with your cat's veterinarian and get recommendations for your cat.
- Owners are often unaware of how much their cat is actually eating on a daily basis, especially in households with multiple cats.
- Monitor food intake so you know immediately if your cat is eating less. This helps your veterinarian intervene sooner when problems are easier to address.

### **10. Enjoy Your Special Bond.**

- Bonds with our older companions are special and we rely on our cats as much as they rely on us. Elderly cats often crave more attention than they had earlier in life.
- Continue to provide physical and mental stimulation by petting, playing, and interacting in your special ways.
- Help out with grooming by gently brushing or combing, and keep nails from becoming overgrown with regular [nail trims](#). The nails of older arthritic cats sometimes overgrow into the paw pads, and this is painful.



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