

## WHEN TO VISIT THE VET - CATS

### Annually

- Annual Exam. Cats should be taken to their veterinarian once per year for their annual check-up, to allow their vet to monitor their eyes, teeth and organs. Early detection / treatment of illnesses can both significantly reduce treatment cost as well as increase treatment success.
- Blood Panel. After your cat reaches 7 years of age, he or she should have a blood panel included in their annual exam to detect the onset of organ failure, thyroid problems and other medical issues caused by age.

### Emergency

- Disuse of Litter Box. When cats don't use the litter box, they are almost always trying to communicate that there is something wrong. The problem may be behavioral or medical.
  - Inappropriate Urination. This could be a sign of cystitis (bladder inflammation), a urinary tract infection or bladder / kidney stones. A dry food diet is a leading cause of these conditions. If your cat repeatedly enters the litter box without urinating or cries in pain when urinating, seek immediate medical attention, as this could be due to a ruptured bladder or a severe case of crystals.
  - Inappropriate Defecation. This could be a sign of colitis (inflammation of the colon) or a number of other bowel disorders, especially if there is blood in the stool.
- Not Eating. An ongoing lack of interest in food can indicate a number of medical problems and warrants a visit to the vet, especially for kittens or older cats that are more adversely affected by loss of calories. An overweight cat that goes over 48 hours without eating can develop hepatic lipidosis (Fatty Liver Disease), which can be fatal.
- Hiding. Hiding is an instinctive response to illness or to a perceived threat. If your cat is not eating properly, is not using the litter box regularly, is hissing or growling (a possible sign of pain), you should visit the vet.
- Unusual Hair Loss. If shedding is accompanied by bald spots, skin irritation, excessive grooming, or other signs of illness, the cat should be taken to the vet. The presence of bald patches may indicate ringworm or mange, both of which are easily treatable and unlikely to spread if caught early and treated aggressively.
- Dental Disease. Drooling, open-mouthed breathing and bad breath can all be signs of dental disease, and bacterial infections in the mouth can spread to other vital organs, causing irreparable damage. These problems can be prevented by regularly cleaning your cat's teeth.
- Excessive Thirst. If your cat is drinking and / or urinating too frequently, it may be necessary for her to undergo a physical exam with a blood panel to measure organ function.
- Frequent Vomiting. While a little vomiting is not uncommon and not necessarily a cause of concern, excessive vomiting, especially in older cats and kittens, may warrant a trip to the vet, particularly when there are multiple episodes within a few hours.
- Unusual Behavior. When an older cat yowls loudly and paces at night, it is possible she or he is suffering from either hyperthyroidism (also indicated by excessive thirst) or feline cognitive disorder, similar to Alzheimer's disease. An asthmatic cat may stand with her elbows out or breathe slowly and deliberately, while a cat with an upper respiratory infection will often breathe with her mouth open. These are behavioral indicators that a vet visit may be in order.