



Kitten Tutor™

Kitten Tutor™: Getting Your Kitten Used to the Car/Crate

It's a fact: people don't take their cats to the vet as often as their dogs -- or as often as they should in general. Getting them into a cat carrier can be a challenge. Getting them out of the cat carrier at the vet's office may be same challenge in reverse. When fear really kicks in, some cats can be outright aggressive once they are at the vet's office.

But cats are stoic, hiding symptoms of illness or injury. So it is important to schedule regular check-ups and blood work so illnesses and injuries can be caught early and addressed promptly before they progress to something worse.

To help your kitty – and you – get out the door, here are some suggestions for taking that second step (the first being Make The Appointment): getting your cat into the cat carrier.

- Make sure your carrier is big enough. Don't try to stuff a large cat into a small box. Your cat needs to be comfortable in the carrier. He should be able to stand up and move around easily. A top-loading carrier may be easier to use than one that requires the cat to walk in through a door.
- Get your kitty used to seeing the carrier by putting it out somewhere as a regular hiding/sleeping spot. Line it with bedding that has your scent on it and include a favorite kitty toy. It may take time for your cat to become familiar with it as a regular spot, but it will pay off when it's time to travel to the vet.
- Train your kitten. Yes, you can! Consider rewarding your feline for looking at, touching and/or exploring the carrier. You can mark the behavior you want with a 'Yes!' and the treat can follow. Bribing is another way. A trail of treats leading into the carrier, or a treat once the cat is in the carrier, perhaps. Another option is to spray/wipe the inside of the carrier with a feline facial pheromone product 30 minutes before putting the cat into the carrier to help calm your kitty. If your cat still seems stressed, ask your vet about medications to help calm your cat for vet visits.

Another option may be to find a vet who makes house calls. While this may be a less stressful way for your cat – and you! – to get through a vet visit, it may present challenges of its own. We all know our cats are smarter than Smart, and they seem to know exactly who is ringing the door bell, at which point they disappear. If you have such a prescient feline, make sure you've contained her somewhere – a bathroom? – where you are guaranteed to win the hide and seek game that begins before the front door opens.

The adage is trite but true: an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Regular vet visits can help keep your kitty healthy and find potentially serious illnesses before they become a problem. So make that appointment - and who knows, everyone may have a fun story to tell afterward. Including kitty.

NKC offers Kitten Tutor™ handouts free to anyone interested in saving kittens. We are a 501(c)(3) and teach shelters, rescues, foster families and the veterinary community how to save more kittens. To learn more, visit: www.kittencoalition.org. © 2020 National Kitten Coalition