



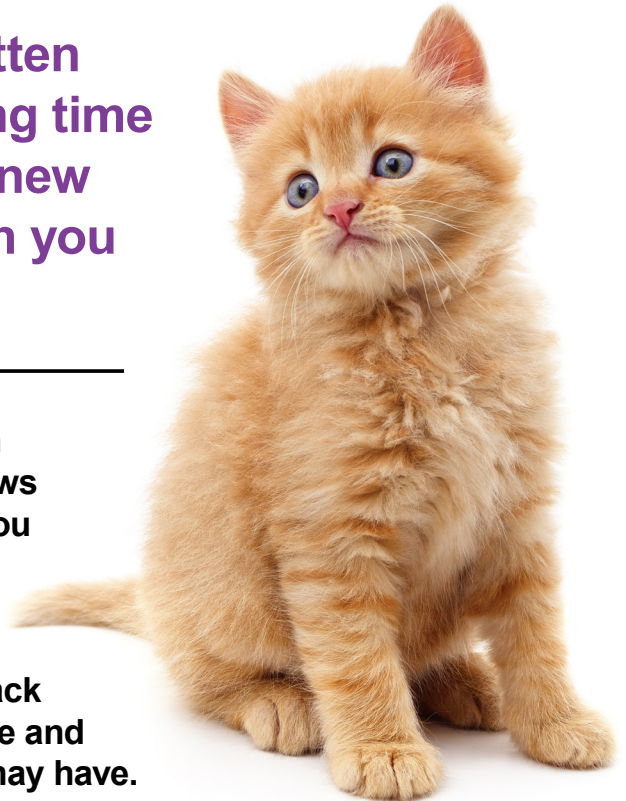
**Beaumont Sainsbury
Animal Hospital**

Royal Veterinary College

Your kitten **CARE GUIDE**

Bringing a new kitten home is an exciting time and the start of a new adventure for both you and your kitten.

Your life will change when the pitter-patter of tiny paws are heard and suddenly you will be responsible for all aspects of the care of a living, breathing animal. We've put together this pack to give you some guidance and help with questions you may have.



Everything you need to know for a happy, healthy start

Gold standard cat friendly care

The Beaumont Sainsbury Animal Hospital is accredited by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons as a Tier Three Animal Hospital - the highest level of clinical and customer care standards that veterinary practices can achieve.

The Beaumont Sainsbury Animal Hospital has also been awarded the highest level award for cat friendly care by the International Society of Feline Medicine (ISFM). This award is in recognition of the outstanding facilities and service that we are able to provide to our feline patients. For example:

- Completely separate cat ward (so that cats can recover from illness or surgery in peace and quiet)
- Completely separate isolation ward so that stray or infectious cats can be cared for without any risk to the other patients
- Generously sized cat accommodation with hiding spaces and raised resting places
- Separate cat waiting area with elevated basket resting places and cat carrier covers for additional privacy
- The entire practice team has undergone specific training in cat friendly handling techniques



Vaccinations

Vaccinations are vital for both kittens and adult cats. Vaccination involves an initial course followed by boosters every year. This will protect your cat against a whole range of distressing and life-threatening diseases. Kittens receive some natural protection from their mother if she has been vaccinated, but this wanes with time. They should be vaccinated initially from 9 weeks of age, and then again 3-4 weeks later. After the initial course your kitten should receive regular booster injections on a yearly basis.

Once your kitten has had the primary course of vaccinations you will be given a certificate of vaccination. If you ever put your cat into a cattery you will need to produce a valid vaccination certificate before your cat is accepted, as the risk of cat flu is very high when cats are kept together. The main diseases that kittens and cats are vaccinated against are:

- Feline Infectious Enteritis (Panleucopaenia)
- Cat Flu (feline calicivirus and herpesvirus)
- Feline Leukaemia

Other vaccinations

It is also possible to vaccinate your cat against rabies, if you are considering taking your cat abroad. Please visit our pet travel page

Please visit our pet travel page:
rvc.uk.com/pet-travel

Worming

Almost all kittens carry roundworms, passed from their mother. We recommend monthly worming until 6 months old. After that, your vet will help decide a long-term worming plan based on outdoor access, hunting, and household members. Spot-on and tablet options are available.

Roundworm eggs are common in soil and can be carried into the home on shoes or your cat's fur. Cats swallow them when grooming and become infected. One type, *Toxocara*, can occasionally spread to people and cause health issues, including blindness.

Tapeworms are caught by eating fleas, mice, birds, or raw meat.

Our vets can advise on the best worming and flea regime for your cat, explain the options, and tailor a plan for their lifestyle and health. We can explain the different products available, and help you decide on a worming regime during any routine consultation.

Flea treatment

Fleas commonly cause itchiness and irritation in cats - and can bite people too! Some cats are allergic to flea bites, which can cause severe skin damage even if only a few fleas are present. Live fleas are rarely seen, as cats often remove them while grooming, but flea dirt - tiny, dark, crumbly particles - may be found in the coat. Adult fleas are less than 5% of the population; the eggs, larvae, and pupae develop in carpets, furniture, and between floorboards. Fleas can hop long distances, and you may bring them into the house on your shoes. A female flea can lay up to 40 eggs a day, and larvae can survive indoors for up to two years. Fleas are caught from grass, carpets, furniture, or other animals such as cats, dogs, hedgehogs, or rabbits.

Prevention is better than cure. For cats at high risk, we recommend monthly flea control to stop infestations before they start. A wide range of products is available, and our vets can help you choose the most suitable option.

Tablets are generally preferred for better environmental safety and effectiveness, but spot-on products are available for cats that will not take tablets.

Microchipping

All adult cats living in the UK must be microchipped. A microchip is a tiny device (approximately the size of a grain of rice) that is injected under the skin at the back of your cat's neck. If your cat goes missing and is taken to a veterinary surgery, police station, cat warden or rehoming kennels, staff will scan your cat and read the unique microchip code. This identifies your cat on a central database so that you can be contacted and your pet returned. The microchip is also an essential part of the Travel Scheme for cats travelling abroad.

Microchip-activated cat flaps and cat feeders are available and can be very useful.

Teeth

Cat's teeth accumulate tartar and become infected and/or loose just like people's teeth. To some extent it is possible to slow down the development of these problems by providing crunchy biscuits or dental chewy treats in addition to tinned food. However, the best way to protect your cat's teeth is by brushing them every day. Not all cats will tolerate this but if you start whilst they are young, many cats will accept it.

You can purchase special pet toothbrushes that fit over the end of your finger, or use a soft child's toothbrush. Human toothpastes are not suitable for cats but you can buy non-foaming, poultry or meat flavoured toothpastes. Our vets or nurses will be happy to demonstrate how to brush your cat's teeth in any routine consultation and assist you with the selection of appropriate products.

Cats can also suffer from resorptive dental disease, which can be aggravated by poor oral health but is also related to genetics and some viral infections.

Regular dental checks are important to detect and react to dental disease at an early stage. Our vets and nurses will check your cat's teeth at every routine check and vaccination appointment

Pet Health Plans

Our Pet Health Plans are designed to provide cost-savings and convenience by spreading the cost of your kitten's preventative health care (6 monthly vet checks, flea/worm/tick treatment, vaccinations, microchipping) with a monthly direct-debit scheme. The scheme also offers discounted rates on dental treatment, neutering and food purchased from the practice.

Further details can be found at <https://rvc.uk.com/pet-health-plan-SM>

Insurance

Unfortunately cats suffer from accidents and illness just like us and there is no NHS for animals, the cost of treatment has to be met by the pet's owner. For example, if your cat was unlucky enough to have a collision with a car and need emergency treatment and surgery these costs could run into thousands of pounds. Older cats can develop chronic illnesses such as diabetes requiring that require ongoing treatment for the rest of their lives. We strongly recommend that pet owners take out insurance so that if your cat is unlucky enough to become unwell, we are able to offer the best possible care without you having to worry about how to pay for it! There are lots of different companies offering pet insurance, so it is worth taking the time to research them. At the Beaumont Sainsbury Animal Hospital we recommend a "lifetime" cover policy and a minimum annual cover of £4000 (£7000 is better).

Please note that Pet Health Plans are for preventative health care and insurance policies are for unexpected costs associated with injury and illness. We recommend that pet owners take out both products to ensure that all of their pet's health-related costs are covered.

Diet

Kittens have different nutritional needs to adult cats. Any kitten food labelled as 'a complete pet food for cats' will be nutritionally balanced for your kitten. Dried food may help reduce tartar accumulation on the teeth, but a completely dry diet can aggravate urinary problems. We recommend to include some dried and some tinned food in your cat's diet for these reasons. To figure out how much to feed your kitten, use the feeding guide on the label of your kitten food as a starting point and adjust the amount to maintain optimum body weight. Amounts will vary depending on your cat's age, size, activity level, temperament, environment and health. Kittens should be fed three or four times daily up until six months of age when two meals daily are appropriate. Many cats are sensible about the amount of food that they eat but some cats are too greedy and will become overweight if allowed unrestricted access to food so it's best to keep an eye on their weight.

Kittens can suffer from diarrhoea and/or colitis if they are suddenly changed from one diet to another. Find out from the breeder what your kitten was fed with and either continue with this diet or change it very gradually over a week or so.

Neutering

Female cats

Kittens usually come into season for the first time when they are approximately six months old. They tend to come into season every few weeks if they are not mated. Cats may become more vocal and roll about on the floor a lot when they are in season but this is perfectly normal! We very strongly advise that all female cats are spayed unless you wish to breed from them.

This prevents unwanted pregnancies and reduces the risk of transmission of infections such as feline immunodeficiency virus. The spay operation involves removing the ovaries under a general anaesthetic.

We can do this from four to six months of age and most cats do not need to stay in overnight. If you do wish to breed from your cat we recommend that you wait until she is a year old and fully mature herself, so keep her indoors to prevent pregnancy prior to this. Your cat should be fit and healthy before you breed from her - she should be fully vaccinated and free from any health problems. It is unwise to breed from cats with an aggressive temperament or any genetic disease.

Male cats

We very strongly recommend that all male cats are neutered unless they are specially kept as stud cats at a breeding establishment. If an entire male cat is kept indoors it is likely that he will begin to spray urine in the house and if he goes outside, he is much more likely to fight with other cats, and will tend to roam much further than a castrated male cat. This leads to a high incidence of fight wounds, life threatening infections (such as Feline Leukaemia Virus and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus) and road accidents. Male cats enter puberty at between six and ten months of age.

We recommend castration is carried out when your cat is four to six months old. The castration is carried out under a general anaesthetic, but is a very short procedure and most cats do not need to stay in overnight.



Pre-visit advice for pets visiting Beaumont Sainsbury Hospital

Making an appointment

Appointments can be made using the online booking system or by calling Reception. You may choose any available vet, but seeing the same vet consistently helps build continuity of care and rapport between the pet, owner, and vet.

For emergencies, please call the practice directly rather than using the online system so that urgent attention can be arranged.

Travelling to the hospital

Cats and small pets should travel to the practice in a safe and secure carrier. This should be large enough for the pet to turn around inside. Pets should be transported in individual carriers rather than sharing (litters of kittens are an exception to this). Carriers should be well-ventilated but primarily opaque so that the inhabitants are not “on display”. A blanket can be draped over the carrier to assist with this.

Arriving at the hospital

Clients should “check in” at the reception desk. The practice has separate waiting areas for dogs, cats and small mammals and these are clearly marked.

During the appointment

At the start, the vet will discuss any concerns you have about your pet's health, behaviour, and routines. Please bring details of their diet, any medicines, symptoms you've noticed, and vaccination records - especially if someone else is bringing your pet.

Examination

After a short discussion, the vet or student will examine your pet. This may include watching how they move or gently handling them to check specific areas. Treats are often used to help cats relax - feel free to bring your cat's favourite if they have one. Pets coming for surgery, sedation, or digestive issues should not be fed treats during the visit.

Nervous cats

We understand vet visits can be stressful. For anxious cats, “hands off” observation, anti-anxiety medication, or gentle sedation may be recommended.

As a Gold ISFM Cat Friendly Practice, we aim to make every visit as calm and positive as possible.

Going outside

Vaccination protection is complete ten days after the second vaccination, so technically it is safe for your kitten to go outside and have contact with other cats from this point onwards. However there are other points to consider when deciding whether to let your cat out or not:

- **Bullying** – a young, small kitten is vulnerable to bullying from other cats
- **Traffic** – all cats are at risk from road traffic accidents. The risk is higher if you live very close to a busy road. Younger cats are likely to be less traffic wise
- **Other infections** – vaccinations only protect against the specific diseases described at the start of this booklet. Once your cat is going out and about he or she will come into contact with more bacterial/viral infections and also parasites such as fleas and worms than they would if they stayed indoors. It is sensible to consider your home and kitten's situation before deciding when and how to allow your cat to go outside.

Start with short, supervised garden visits, using a harness if needed. Let your kitten out before feeding to encourage return. Keep cats indoors after dark, when most accidents and fights occur.

Emergencies

During opening hours, call the practice and a team member will assess your pet.

Outside of our opening hours you will have the option of taking your pet to:

Queen Mother Hospital for Animals, RVC, Hatfield AL9 7TA, 01707 666399 – this is our sister hospital and is fully staffed 24/7 with emergency, critical care, trauma facilities, and specialist vets. Most cases can be treated as outpatients.

Vet 24, 10 Belsize Terrace, Belsize Park, NW3 4AX – for clients preferring an emergency service in central London

Overnight patients at Beaumont Sainsbury Animal Hospital are cared for by an on-site night nurse, with our vets on call for hospitalised pets.

Beaumont Sainsbury Animal Hospital 4 Royal College Street, London, NW1 0TU

Monday to Friday: 08:00 – 19:00

Saturday: 09:00 – 15:30

Sunday: 10:30 – 15:30

Telephone: 020 7387 8134

Emergency Care (Outside Opening Hours):

Vet24 0870 873 4576

www.rvc.ac.uk/BSAH