



Weight Management in Cats



Obesity is a common health problem for cats and it increases the risk of serious diseases such as diabetes, and cardiovascular, respiratory, and musculo-skeletal disorders.

The most common causes of obesity in cats are overfeeding and feeding an inappropriate diet. Cats naturally have a need for high protein, moderate fat, low carbohydrate food. Unfortunately, many pet parents feed their cats kibble based diets that are very high in carbohydrates. These foods are very difficult for cat's bodies to metabolize and can lead to obesity and diabetes. Your veterinarian can help you to determine what diet is most appropriate for your feline companion and how much to feed. If your pet is already overweight, a weight loss program should be considered. Always consult with your veterinarian prior to implementing a weight loss plan for your cat.

It is also very important to realize that cats can develop a life threatening liver disease if they lose weight too quickly! Therefore it is very important that you speak with your veterinarian prior to implementing a weight loss program!

Generally, recommendations for weight loss in cats are very similar to recommendations for people seeking to lose weight. Program steps include:

- **Portion Control:** Just as with any weight loss plan, it is imperative to limit the amount of calories consumed. This can best be achieved by measuring your cat's meals with a 1 cup measuring cup. If your cat is used to "grazing" throughout the day, you can try feeding two or three small meals (instead of one large meal) daily. This will help your cat to increase the amount of energy used to digest food and will prevent him or her from getting too hungry throughout the day.
- **Try canned food:** Some cats metabolize their food better if it is high protein, low carbohydrate and moderate fat. Offering canned food helps to fill these requirements and can help some cats lose weight. Consider it a "Cat-kins" diet!
- **Eliminate treats:** Treats such as Pounce can be like having a candy bar. If your cat likes treats, you can try switching him or her to lower calorie snacks or even try offering plain canned pumpkin. Many cats will eat 1-2 tbsps per day. This is a high fiber, low calorie snack for any cat!
- **Keep a diary:** A daily or weekly log of exercise duration and your pet's weight will help you modify your own behavior regarding what you are feeding your cat.



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Exercise is an important part of a cat's weight management program. A few extra minutes of play time each day may be just what your cat needs to help control weight and stay in shape. Exercise increases energy use and promotes more efficient calorie burning, as well as toning muscles.

Before starting any exercise program with your cat, check with your veterinarian to make sure your plans are suited to your pet's physical condition. Then begin slowly, by adding 5 minutes of play time per day for your cat. Laser pen lights and feather toys are excellent options to help get your cat moving. Depending on your cat's condition, you can increase each week until you are up to 15 minutes of play time several times a day.

Weight loss is never easy, but any efforts to keep your cat trim and healthy will add years to your friend's life!

What's your cat's body condition score?



1. Ribs visible on shorthaired cats; no palpable fat; severe abdominal tuck; lumbar vertebrae and wings of ilia easily palpated.

2. Ribs easily visible on shorthaired cats; lumbar vertebrae obvious with minimal muscle mass; pronounced abdominal tuck; no palpable fat.



3. Ribs easily palpable with minimal fat covering; lumbar vertebrae obvious; obvious waist behind ribs; minimal abdominal fat.

4. Ribs palpable with minimal fat covering; noticeable waist behind ribs; slight abdominal tuck; abdominal fat pad absent.



5. Well-proportioned; observe waist behind ribs; ribs palpable with slight fat covering; abdominal fat pad minimal.

6. Ribs palpable with slight excess fat covering; waist and abdominal fat pad distinguishable but not obvious; abdominal tuck absent.



7. Ribs not easily palpated with moderate fat covering; waist poorly discernible; obvious rounding of abdomen; moderate abdominal fat pad.

8. Ribs not palpable with excess fat covering; waist absent; obvious rounding of abdomen with prominent abdominal fat pad; fat deposits present over lumbar area.



9. Ribs not palpable under heavy fat cover; heavy fat deposits over lumbar area, face and limbs; distention of abdomen with no waist; extensive abdominal fat deposits.

Which did you answer? If your cat ranked anything other than a 5 (ideal), please speak with your veterinarian today to create a proper diet plan to keep him or her healthy for as long as possible!