



Health Tips for Shelter Cat Adopters

Adopting a cat from a local animal shelter or rescue organization is a great way to save a life while gaining a loving companion. Just be sure you're prepared to supply good health care along with lots of unconditional love. Cats in animal shelters have varied health histories—some arrive with a complete record of veterinary care, while others come in as strays with unknown histories. Because of this, it's important to understand the basics of disease prevention and management.

If you're considering adopting a shelter cat, consider the following questions:

1 Why does my cat need veterinary care? Just like you, your cat needs regular physical examinations and preventive care. Routine veterinary visits can actually save money in the long run by catching signs of health conditions early, when intervention can be most effective.

2 Who will be my cat's veterinarian? If you don't have a veterinarian in mind, ask the animal shelter staff for recommendations. Look for options such as cat-only practices and general practices that promote a cat-friendly or "fear-free" environment.

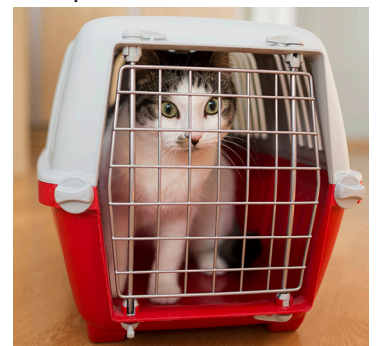
3 What should I take to my cat's first veterinary visit? Plan to take your newly adopted kitty to a veterinarian within the first week. Bring your cat's health records (the shelter should supply these), so your new veterinarian can make decisions about disease testing and prevention. If you've adopted a kitten, be aware that you will be making frequent visits during the first year of life.

4 Is my cat protected from parasites? "Inside" parasites such as heartworms and intestinal parasites are mostly out of sight, but shouldn't be out of mind. While often associated with dogs, heartworms can infect cats, too, causing severe lung disease. Roundworms and hookworms, meanwhile, are fairly common in cats, and can even infect your human family.

A monthly heartworm preventive can protect your cat from both heartworms and intestinal worms. Depending on the product recommended by your veterinarian, your preventive may also protect your cat from pesky "outside" parasites, such as fleas, ticks and mites, which can spread discomfort and disease. Just be sure to administer the preventive year-round, even if your cat lives indoors. And remember: feline heartworm infection cannot be treated, so monthly prevention is vital.

5 Will my cat be stressed? While your cat will adjust to his or her home in a matter of weeks, the transition can be stressful. Appetite loss is common, so continue feeding the food he or she was eating at the animal shelter, at least for awhile. Stress can also cause symptoms such as diarrhea. If this is an issue, your veterinarian may recommend a probiotic supplement or a medication to help manage the problem.

Finally, give your new kitty time to get used to the sounds and smells of your home. Start him or her up in a quiet room that's off the beaten path. Stock the basics, such as food, fresh water, a litter box and a comfortable bed.



Congratulations on your new pet's adoption! With the help of your veterinarian, you and your new kitty can look forward to many happy, healthy years together.