

# What should I feed my kitten?

A veterinary nutritionist weighs in on common kitten nutrition questions.

**H**aving a new kitten is fun, but also a little intimidating. You love your new best friend and want what's best for her. You want to give her the best foundation to grow and thrive. And then you face the pet food aisle at the pet store or grocery store and don't know the right choice. So we asked a veterinary nutritionist to answer some common questions from kitten owners. Thanks, Dr. Joe Bartges!

## First things first

Cats are obligate carnivores, which means that their bodies lack the ability to create certain compounds and they must get them directly from their diet. The important compounds cats need are found only in meat, so your kitten cannot be a vegetarian. It's also important that your kitten eat a diet that's labeled for "growth" or at least says "all stages of life."

## Should I give my kitten vitamins?

It's especially important that kittens have what they need while they're growing, and high-quality diets should provide all the nutrients needed. Vitamin supplements aren't necessary. In fact, giving supplements to growing animals can be a bad idea. Excessive or abnormal

mineral balance can affect normal growth. Ask your veterinary team for their favorite kitten food brands and remember—the best brands might not be the most expensive or the most advertised brands.

## How much do I feed my kitten?

Your kitten needs calories during growth, but you don't want to begin a trend toward obesity. Your veterinary team is the best resource to help you figure out if your kitten is growing appropriately or is overweight, and they can give you an accurate feeding guide. One great way to feed is measuring the amount of food offered and setting up meal times so your kitten doesn't overeat or snack excessively from boredom. Puzzle feeders or multiple feeding sites can be helpful for kittens, too. In the wild, cats hunt for food!

## Is some vomiting and diarrhea normal for kittens?

Even if your kitten feels great, she should not be throwing up or having

loose stool. Take kittens with these issues to be evaluated right away by a veterinarian. There are lots of possible causes for these problems, and a veterinarian can diagnose and treat them.

## Should I feed my kitten a homemade or raw diet?

Raw diets are in the news, but Dr. Bartges thinks that raw and/or homemade diets are risky for young animals. The risks for nutrient imbalance and infectious disease are too high during a kitten's growth. The best advice for meeting your kitten's nutritional needs? Take advantage of your veterinary team's treasure trove of information that they love sharing with you.

