



**SAVE
THEM
ALL**



Weaning Kitten Care

Four to eight weeks old

Weaning and feeding

At approximately four weeks old kittens reach the weaning stage, when their teeth have begun to emerge and gruel (wet food slurry) can be introduced to their diet. Even though a kitten is weaning, continue to bottle-feed to ensure proper nutrition until she is eating on her own (approximately five to six weeks old).

Weaning kittens four to five weeks old

Food – One-half can of gruel per kitten in one dish, dry baby cat kibble in another dish along with a small bowl of water (Use formula three to four times per day.)

Frequency – Keep kibble, water and gruel available at all times. Give 13-17 cc of formula every six to eight hours (three to four times per day). The frequency and amount of formula should be decreased as gruel eating increases.



Kittens five to eight weeks old eating solid food on their own

Food – One-half can of wet food per kitten in a shallow dish, kibble in another shallow dish and a small bowl of water at all times

Frequency – Offer fresh gruel every eight hours (three times per day)



Gruel mixing tips

Mix wet canned kitten food with formula, forming a smooth slurry. At five weeks old, replace the formula with warm water.

Kibble, dry food tips

- Kittens four to five weeks old should be given baby cat kibble, watered down slightly to soften (if necessary).
- Kittens five to seven weeks old should be given a mix of baby cat kibble with slightly larger kitten kibble. Gradually decrease the amount of the previous kibble while increasing the amount of new food helps prevent tummy troubles.
- Kittens older than seven weeks should be given kitten dry food along with wet canned food.

Feeding steps

1. During bottle-feeding sessions, start by offering kitten gruel from a spoon, finger or tongue depressor. It is important to start getting small amounts of gruel into your kitten's stomach.
2. If the kitten shows interest, guide her to the dish of gruel and gently encourage eating on her own.
3. Always supplement meals with a bottle of formula until the kitten is able to eat a full meal without any help.

Syringe feeding

Some kittens will not take easily to bottle-feeding or gruel. Kittens rely on scent, instinct and their mother to guide them to proper feeding. Always try to let kittens eat on their own first. If a kitten is not eating very well on her own or is not eating at all, then supplementing with syringe feeding is appropriate; however, weaning kittens are susceptible to becoming syringe-dependent if they learn to associate the syringe with food. Take extra care not to allow kittens to become dependent on the syringe for nourishment because it will impact the weaning process and the kitten's health.

1. Prepare the gruel, ensuring that the consistency is smooth enough for the syringe.
2. Use a 1 cc or 3 cc syringe to draw up gruel.
3. Place the syringe tip at the side of the kitten's mouth between the teeth. Do not aim too far in the back of the mouth because it might cause gagging or aspiration. Avoid feeding toward the front of the mouth because it might confuse the kitten into thinking it is a nipple.
4. Squirt a small amount of gruel in the back region of the kitten's mouth.



Litter box

- At approximately four weeks old, kittens no longer need assistance going to the bathroom and can go on their own.
- Introduce a shallow, easily accessible litter box to the space. Fill it slightly with nonclumping litter. Continue using nonclumping litter until kitten is about seven to eight weeks old because younger kittens may eat the litter and if they do so, it can cause illness and blockages.
- Cats instinctively know how to use the litter box, so training is not required. Just make sure the kittens know where the box is and keep it close to avoid accidents.

Socialization

- Socialization and enrichment are important to keep kittens happy and healthy. They both help kittens get ready for adoption into their new forever homes.
- You can start giving kittens age-appropriate cat toys at three to four weeks old. This is also a great time to give them plenty of petting and snuggles so they learn how to socialize with humans.
- Keeping littermates together helps kittens develop because they learn from each other as they grow. By having other kittens around to socialize with, they'll learn how to get along harmoniously with other cats.

Adoption and spay/neuter

- Once kittens are approximately eight weeks old and weigh at least two pounds, they are ready to be spayed or neutered, and when that is complete they are ready for adoption.
- Start by contacting relatives and friends who might want to adopt. Refer to Best Friends Animal Society foster resources for tips on how to find homes for your kittens, as well as online platforms for connecting kittens with forever families.