

Cat Health and Safety

General Cat Safety Tips

- Kitten proof your home by removing breakables and items that can harm a kitten.
- Always put wand toys away in a secure cupboard or closet when not in use. If left unsupervised, the string on a wand toy can lead to strangulation and death.
- Keep garbage cans out of reach and secure. Bones, strings and other waste left in the garbage can cause intestinal blockages leading to huge vet bills and even death.
- Many plants and flowers are toxic to cats. Lilies are particularly toxic and can be deadly if eaten. For more information on household and garden plants, consult one of the many websites available for a comprehensive list of plants with toxic effects for cats. You can find the APSCA's list at <http://www.aspca.org/Pet-care/poison-control/Plants>. Please also download MEOW's free info sheet, *Lilies Can Be Deadly*.
- Plastic bags are dangerous for cats as they can lead to suffocation. Keep plastic grocery bags and the like safely stored and out of reach of your pets.
- If your cat likes to play in paper bags, remove the handles to prevent accidental strangulation.
- Keep toxic household products, including medications and pharmaceuticals, cleaning products, anti-freeze, and paint out of reach. Store these items properly and safely.
- Be sure to protect your pet from pesticides. Download MEOW's *Protect Your Pet From Pesticides* info sheet for more information.
- Venetian blinds and curtain cords can cause death by strangulation. Shorten these strings and place out of reach.
- Tinsel and electrical cords also pose hazards. Keep these items out of reach of your pets.
- Be cautious when using reclining chairs. Cats often like to lay under the foot rest when extended. Take care when collapsing the foot rest, making sure no cats are beneath.
- If your cat wears a collar, make sure it is a 'break-away' type. Break-away collars are designed to safely undo or "break away" if your cat should ever get caught or snagged on something.
- Remember: any cat on a leash and harness requires supervision 100% of the time.

Escape Prevention

- Do not open windows during the first few weeks of having a new cat at home.
- Secure window screens that can be easily removed and repair or replace torn screens.
- If your house has just one exterior door, consider installing a screen door in front. When visitors come to the door, the risk of a cat darting out is greatly reduced when you are able to talk to the visitors through the screen.
- Lock screen doors so the cat cannot push them open. Retractable screen doors are not secure.
- Put cats in a closed room or in a carrier when repair people, movers, duct cleaners, realtors, etc. come into your home.
- If you have a balcony or deck on the 2nd floor or above, do not let the cat out on it unless it is completely enclosed or the cat is wearing a harness and leash and supervised at all times. Cats are like very young children. They do not have a defined logical sense of height. They can very easily jump over while playing or if frightened, leading to serious injury or death.
- If you live in an apartment, wait until the elevator door is closed before opening your own door. This is especially important if you have a cat who likes to run in the hall.



- When possible, use your garage door to come in and out of the house if you have young children who forget to close doors securely.
- If your cat appears to want outside or is a door darter, keep a squirt bottle with water by each door. Each time the cat attempts to dart, give it a small squirt of water. Be consistent.
- Do not ever leave your door open “just for a minute” while you take out the garbage, bring in the groceries or check the meal on the barbeque. These ordinary everyday actions are responsible for many lost cats each year.
- Always use a sturdy pet carrier to transport your cat(s). NEVER assume it will stay in your arms.

Permanent Identification

- All cats, including indoor cats, need permanent identification. MEOW receives numerous calls each year about indoor cats who have accidentally escaped outside due to visitors, repair people, break and enters or faulty windows, screens or patio doors.
- Approximately 85% of cats that are surrendered to rescue societies do not have permanent identification. As a result, many are never reunited with their owners.
- In Calgary, you can also increase the chance of your lost cat being returned to you by purchasing a City of Calgary Animal and Bylaw Services cat license.

There are two methods of permanent identification available to cat owners: Tattoo and Microchip. Below is an overview of the pros and cons of each.

Tattoo Pros

- Economical
- Readily visible, usually in the right ear

Tattoo Cons

- Must be done under anaesthetic
- May fade or blur or become illegible over time
- If your cat escapes outside in the winter months, parts of the ear (and thus tattoo) may be lost to frostbite
- Often difficult to trace the owner outside of the immediate geographic (i.e. city)

Microchip Pros

- Easily injected under the skin in a regular veterinary office visit
- Cannot be lost, blurred or rendered ineffectual by time or elements
- International tracking databases

Microchip Cons

- More expensive than a tattoo
- A scanner is needed to read the microchip (this can usually be done at a rescue group or veterinary clinic)

No matter what choice of permanent identification you choose, you are responsible to keep your owner information updated at the veterinary clinic that did the tattoo or the microchip company that provided the microchip. If you change your phone numbers, change addresses or give your cat away, please ensure the safe future of your cat and call immediately to update the permanent ID records.

Please note: A collar can be of assistance in identifying a pet, but is not as reliable as a tattoo or microchip. If your cat wears a collar and identity tag, please ensure it is a 'break-away' collar for the safety of your cat.

Is My Cat Sick?

Get to know your cat, its habits and routines. Once you know what is normal for your cat, you'll be able to more easily identify when your cat is sick or acting out-of-sorts. Following are some general behaviours that may be signs of illness in your cat. Remember, this list is only a guideline to help you determine if your cat is sick. If you are unsure, always seek veterinary advice immediately.

Urination and Elimination

- Goes to the litter box frequently with little or no results
- Cries when trying to use the litter box
- Strains in the box
- Has diarrhoea for more than 24 hours
- Stops using the litter box and/or urinates inappropriately in other places
- Has blood in urine
- Growls while grooming its behind or over-grooms in this area
- Has blood in feces
- Drags bottom along carpet or floor

Behaviour

- Is excessively vocal or uncharacteristically quiet
- Is lethargic, withdrawn or sleeping more than normal
- Appears unkempt - does not groom
- Eating habits change (stops eating or eats voraciously)
- Stops drinking or drinks excessively
- Well socialized cat becomes aggressive

Vomiting

Occasional vomiting is normal for cats. However, the following can be signs of illness:

- Vomiting and has diarrhoea
- Frequent vomiting
- Blood in vomit

Other Potential Signs of Illness

- Troubled or laboured breathing
- Coloured discharge from eyes, ears and/or nose
- Rashes, hives, sores
- Drooling
- Limping
- Unexplained lumps or swelling of the body