

EXERCISING YOUR CAT

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DAILY EXERCISE IS IMPORTANT

Have you ever watched your cat exercise? Perhaps your kitty's exercise regimen consists of a mad dash around the house – a furry bullet dashing from room to room. Or possibly it's jumping up on horizontal (and even vertical) surfaces, tearing up the carpets and furniture, or attacking your feet in the middle of the night. Or maybe it's stalking or pawing at some moving critter, like a fly or a lizard.

Exercise is as important to your cat as it is to you. Young cats as well as healthy adult cats need periods of exercise. Even our senior pets need regular exercise to maintain their health and well-being.

We all know that exercise affects us both physically and mentally. The same is true for your cat. Your kitty can become depressed if not sufficiently stimulated. He may keep you awake at night if he does not receive enough stimulation during the day. Cats are wonderful athletes, but they generally like to exercise for brief periods only. A vigorous playtime at night may help you both get some sleep.

ORGANIZED PLAY

Organized play is important and one of the best ways to spend quality time with your pet. Play stimulates your cat mentally. When kittens play together they pick up social skills and self-sufficiency. They refine their stalking and pouncing, as well as coordination and timing required to make a kill. They learn about their environment by exploring and climbing, and they find the best spots to hide in and lie in wait for their victims.

Adult cats, too, enjoy toys that allow them to simulate natural stalking and hunting activity. Commercially available toys are often inviting, but your kitty would probably be happy with anything that he can chase or pounce on. Here are a few things you can try:

- Roll a table-tennis ball across the floor. Sit back and watch as your kitty chases, stalks and swats the ball.
- Wad up a piece of paper, attach an old tie around it so that you can drag the paper around the floor. Soon your cat will launch an attack.
- Get a tall scratching post, preferably one with "branches," that your cat can run up and down. Scratching posts assist your cat to flex his muscles and to shed old claw sheaths.
- Provide a large paper bag or cardboard box for your cat to explore.
- You can also buy elaborate gymnasiums for cats, which your cat *might* climb and explore.

PRECAUTIONS

- Never use string or yarn as a toy. Although your cat may enjoy them, these items can be deadly if swallowed and a portion becomes stuck around the tongue or in the intestinal tract.
- Putting your cat outside is not a particularly good way to encourage exercise. In general, the most important thing you can do to prolong the life of your cat (in addition to kitten vaccinations) is to keep your cat indoors or confined

within a controlled out-of-doors area. This keeps your kitty safe from injury, animals attacks, and the spread of deadly infectious diseases from stray cats.

- Daily exercise or playtime is recommended unless there is a medical problem and your veterinarian has instructed you to limit your cat's activity.