

Cat Food

Obesity is one of the most common life threatening diseases in cats.

Obesity can predispose cats to develop:

- Diabetes – this is one of the biggest risks.
- Cystitis – inflammation of the urinary bladder.
- Liver disease – see the paragraph to the right.
- Skin disease – when cats gain too much weight, they are unable to groom themselves properly. This can lead to hygiene-related skin diseases.
- Degenerative joint disease (“osteoarthritis”).

Protein:

As carnivores, cats normally eat a lot of protein. It is the main nutrient that they use for energy and it is what tells them that they have had enough to eat. To maintain cats at a healthy weight, we recommend feeding high protein foods to most cats. Limiting the amount of food consumed is also important.

Dry foods tend to be higher in carbohydrates than canned food. So they are usually lower in protein. If feeding dry food, we usually recommend feeding one that is at least 40% protein. We don't have any independent research proving any specific brand is best but we have seen good results with Purina ONE Weight Management, Purina ProPlan Weight Management and Innova EVO. A ten pound cat should get about 1/3 cup twice daily.

Canned food may be better for cats than dry food. It is mostly water and protein. We often recommend feeding obese cats nothing but canned food. We recommend finding a quality canned food that is at least 12% protein. A ten pound cat should get about 3 oz. (one small can) twice daily.

Cats are not Small Bears:

Cats are strict carnivores. Their natural diet does not include cranberries, blueberries, tomatoes, yogurt and carrots. They cannot convert beta-carotene into vitamin A or flaxseed oil into omega-3 fatty acids. While all these things have been proven to be beneficial to humans and may be beneficial to bears, they are probably of no value to cats. When these ingredients are used as selling points on a bag of cat food, the overall value of the food should be questioned.

Hepatic Lipidosis:

When obese cats don't eat enough, they are at risk of developing hepatic lipidosis – also called “fatty liver disease”. When this is seen, it is usually because a cat stops eating due to illness, but it can also be caused by a diet that is too restrictive or even by a cat being finicky. This is a severe, life threatening disease. If an obese cat hasn't eaten in 24 hours, it should be considered an emergency.

Raw Foods:

Most raw meat, poultry and fish in the United States is at risk of being contaminated with bacteria such as *E. coli* and salmonella. Cats can get very ill from these foodborne bacteria. Meats should be cooked for cats just as they are for people.

Cystitis:

Inflammation of the urinary bladder can be related to obesity, but it can also sometimes be related directly to diet. In male cats, it can be life threatening. Whenever changing the diet of a male cat, it is important to be aware of this risk. If any signs of cystitis are seen, please call us immediately. Signs include straining to urinate, frequent trips to the litter box, and urinating outside of the litter box.

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