

The First 15 Months

Use this handy timeline to keep track of important dates and see what kinds of developments you should be looking for during your cat's first 15 months.

1

MONTH

- Happy birthday, kitten!
- Weaning onto kitten food should begin
- Begin a kitten deworming schedule in consultation with your vet

2

MONTHS

- Take them to your vet for a checkup and first vaccines
- Begin socializing them with other humans and pets that are known to be vaccinated and up to date
- Get them used to wearing a collar

3

MONTHS

- Take them to your vet for a checkup and second booster vaccines
- Talk to your vet about microchipping and planning their spay or neuter them
- Get them used to being groomed and having paws, ears and mouth looked at and handled

4

MONTHS

- Take them to your vet for a checkup and third booster vaccines
- Continue socializing them
- Talk to your veterinarian about an ongoing monthly flea, tick and worm prevention plan personalized for your local area's risks and your pet's intended lifestyle

5

MONTHS

- You will need to keep your female kitten indoors to avoid unwanted litters
- Male cats may start to roam if they haven't been neutered

6

MONTHS

- Your kitten will have lost all their baby teeth by now and have a full set of adult teeth
- Now is the time to consider spaying and neutering

9

MONTHS

- Your kitten will appear fully grown, but they still need to be fed a special kitten food

12

MONTHS

- Happy first birthday!
- Your kitten is now an adult
- Ask your vet about transitioning to adult food

15

MONTHS

- Your cat needs booster vaccinations



Congratulations on Your New Kitten

Few things in life feel as good as having a kitten in the house, and you're going to have a great time playing and getting to know each other.

During this first year, your kitten will be growing quickly and learning new things every day. The way you care for her is important in giving her the best start possible. Inside this guide, you'll find some tips and suggestions to help her along with her development, as she becomes a part of your family you can't believe you ever lived without.

New Kitten Shopping List

Now that you've got a kitten, you're going to need this stuff, too.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Collar | <input type="checkbox"/> Grooming brush |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ID tag | <input type="checkbox"/> Scratching post |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food and water dishes | <input type="checkbox"/> Nail trimmers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kitten bed | <input type="checkbox"/> Two or three toys |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carrier | |

And, of course, nutritious food. Your vet can recommend the right food for your kitten.



Check out
HillsPet.ca/
HealthyAdvantage
for lots more great
information, too.


Bringing Kitten Home


When you first bring your kitten home, it's important to give her time to adjust to her new surroundings.


During those first few days:


- 🐾 Give your kitten a quiet, warm room of her own for the first few days, gradually exposing the rest of the house to her — let her come out to explore and socialize in her own time
- 🐾 Show her where her food and litter boxes are
- 🐾 Try to keep the household fairly quiet and ensure that all family members are interacting with the kitten in a gentle and calm way
- 🐾 Take lots of time to interact and play with your kitten — this will help create a bond that will last a lifetime


Tips for Kitten-Proofing Your Home


 Use covered trash cans in your house and garage

 Store household chemicals and poisons in a locked cabinet

 Keep electrical cords and wires out of sight or secured to walls

 Keep kitchen countertops clean and clear of food items to reduce temptation

 Keep toilet lids down so your kitten can't fall in or drink from the bowl

 Keep dangling blind and curtain cords out of reach



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Visiting Your Veterinarian

A close-up photograph of a veterinarian in a white lab coat holding a small, fluffy grey kitten. The kitten has yellow eyes and a red collar. The veterinarian's hands are visible, one with a ring and the other with a watch. The background is softly blurred.

Make sure your pet gets a regular veterinary checkup **every 6 months** or as recommended by your veterinarian.

Just like you, your kitten needs immunizations and regular visits to the doctor to maintain optimal health.

Together, you and your veterinarian can provide your kitten with the best care for a long, healthy life. Your veterinarian is the best source of information for your kitten's health, so it's important to follow his or her recommendations for the well-being of your pet.

What to Expect

Some of the common diagnostic tests your veterinarian may want to perform include fecal examinations to check for internal parasites and blood tests to check for diseases. During the physical exam, your veterinarian will feel your kitten's abdomen, listen to the chest, check the condition of the coat, look in the ears for infection and ear mites, and inspect the mouth for tartar buildup or gum disease.

Your Kitten's Vaccinations

Vaccinations play a critical role in your kitten's health by providing protection against infectious diseases. Your veterinarian will start your kitten on a vaccination schedule and will advise you when boosters are necessary.

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information, too.

Feeding Your Kitten

The first few months are vital for your kitten's lifelong health.

Just like people, cats have unique nutritional needs based on age, health and activity level. Choosing a food that will provide your pet with a complete source of nutrition is of great importance. Ask your veterinarian for a recommendation on what food will be the best for your kitten.

Your Kitten's Essential Health Needs

To maximize your pet's potential for a happy life, she needs a food that contains:

-  Antioxidants to promote a healthy immune system
-  Natural DHA to promote brain and vision development
-  Fatty acids to support healthy function of the nervous and immune systems, and promote healthy skin and a shiny coat
-  Easily digestible carbohydrates to supply abundant energy for lively kittens
-  Essential vitamins and minerals to provide a complete balance for growth
-  A great taste, so she'll want to eat it

Hill's® Healthy Advantage® kitten food is uniquely formulated to meet all of these important needs and is recommended by your veterinary healthcare team.

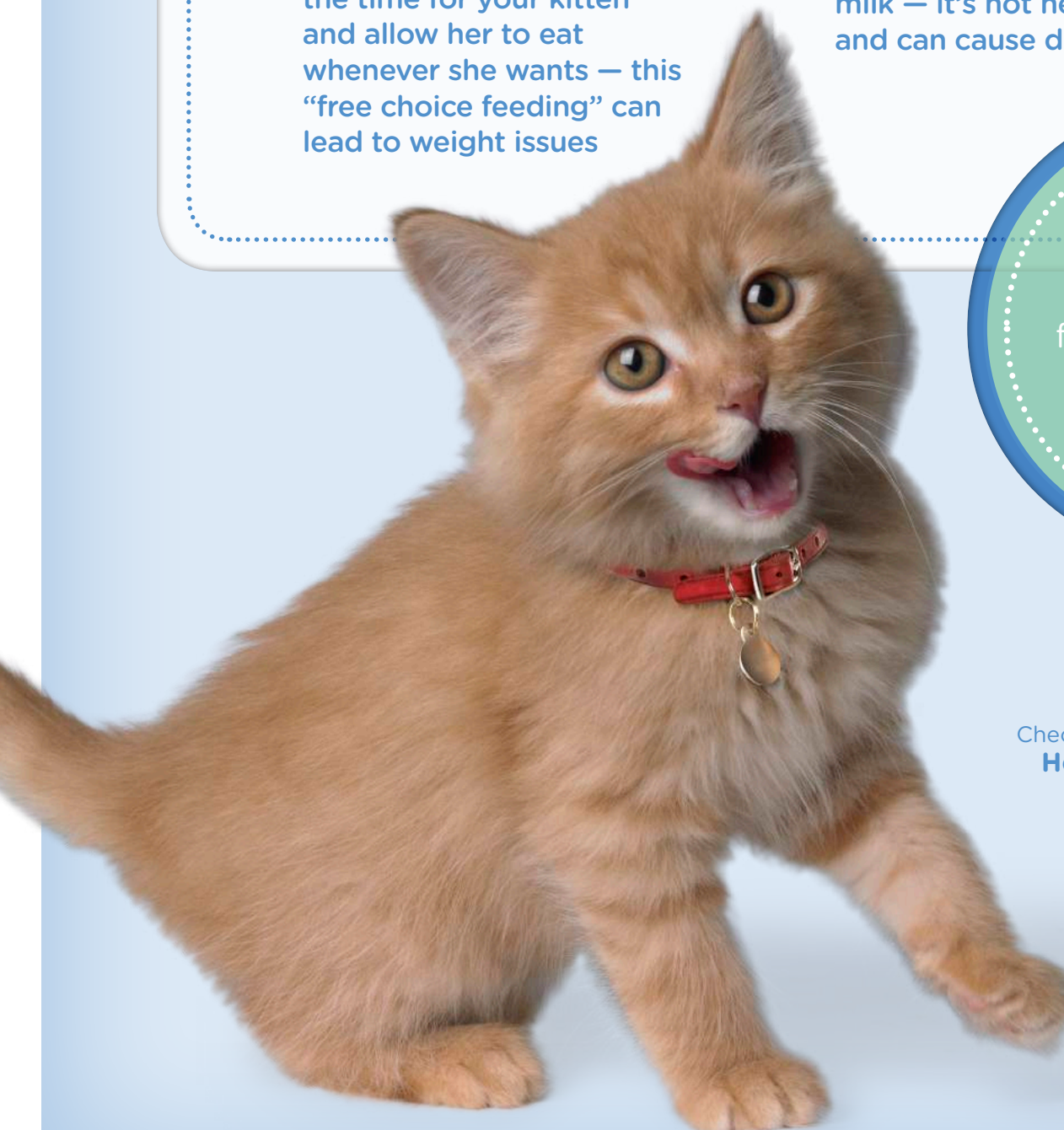
Feeding Tips

- 🐾 Follow the guidelines on your kitten's food packaging
- 🐾 Feed your kitten at the same time every day
- 🐾 Don't leave food out all the time for your kitten and allow her to eat whenever she wants — this "free choice feeding" can lead to weight issues
- 🐾 Avoid feeding table scraps and human food to your kitten — in addition to weight issues, this can create a finicky eater
- 🐾 Don't feed your kitten milk — it's not necessary and can cause diarrhea

Ask your vet

how to read pet food labels so you can make sure you're well informed.

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Signs of Good Health



Spend some time each day **observing your kitten** so you can become familiar with your kitten's specific traits and spot any changes you think you may need to ask your veterinarian about.

What's Normal

EARS:

Should be clean and free of discharge, odour and redness.

WEIGHT:

Active, playful kittens are rarely overweight. Ask your veterinarian for nutritional advice on maintaining your cat's healthy weight.

NOSE:

Should be clean, without discharge or sores.

COAT:

Should be shiny and clean.



MOUTH:

Should smell fresh. Gums should be pink. Teeth should be free of tartar or plaque. Mouth and lips should be free of sores or growths.

EYES:

Should be bright and clear.

LITTER BOX HABITS:

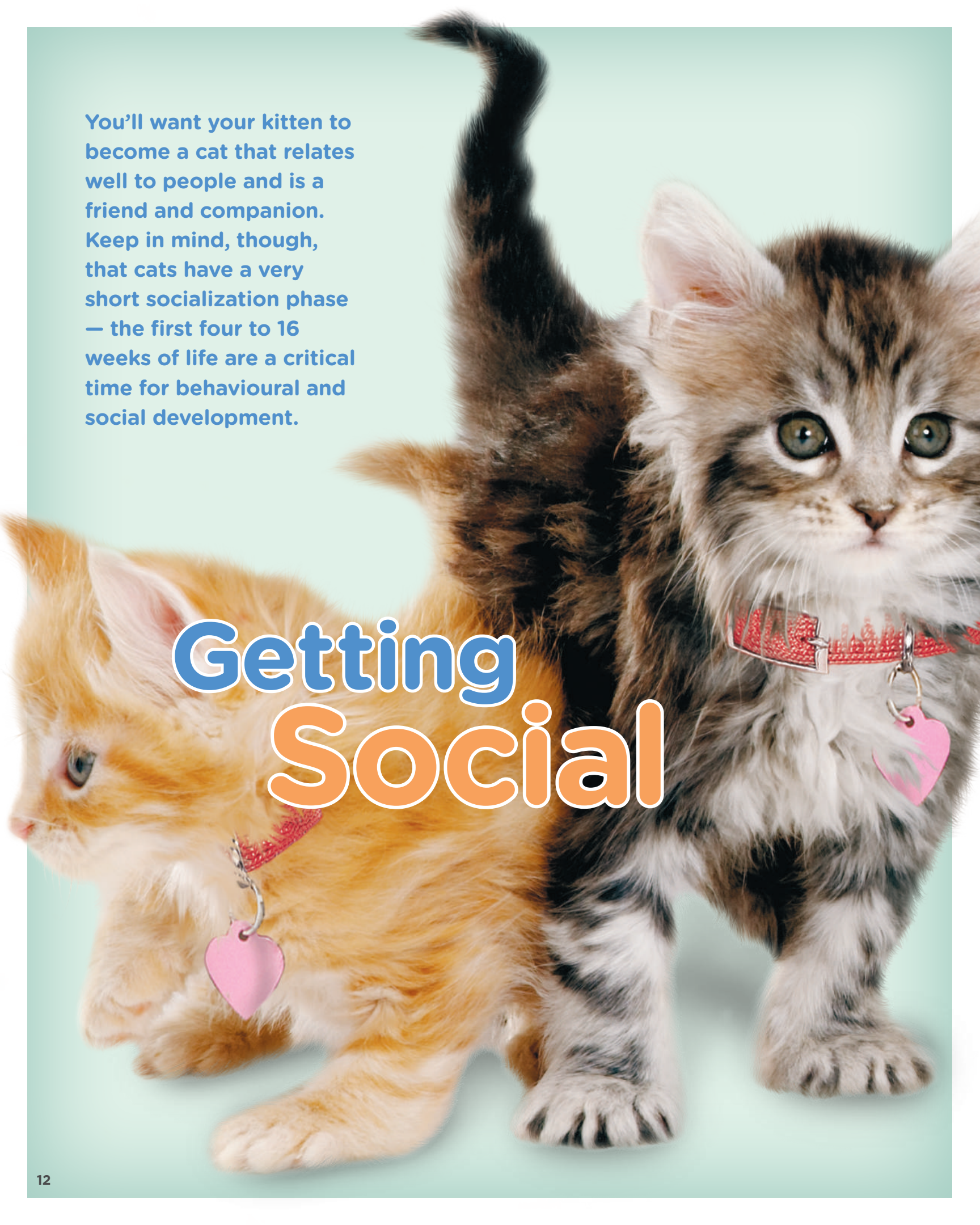
Report changes in litter box habits such as frequency or consistency of your kitten's urine or stool to your veterinarian immediately.

What's Not Normal

- **DIARRHEA:** This common ailment can be caused by many factors, including bacteria, viruses, internal parasites, toxic substances, too much food or psychological upsets. Call your veterinarian if stools are bloody, if there is a large volume of watery stools, if your pet is thin or potbellied, or if the diarrhea continues for more than 24 hours.
- **CONSTIPATION:** Like diarrhea, constipation can be caused by many factors, including ingesting substances such as hair, bones or foreign materials. It may also be a result of disease or insufficient water intake. Your veterinarian may recommend blood tests, X-rays or perform other tests to find the cause.
- **VOMITING:** It is not uncommon for a pet to vomit occasionally, but frequent or persistent vomiting is not normal. Call your veterinarian if vomiting occurs more than five times in a few hours, if large volumes are vomited, if the vomit contains blood or if the vomiting is accompanied by diarrhea or abdominal pain.
- **ABNORMAL URINATION:** Straining to urinate or bloody urine may indicate a painful infection of the urinary tract. Contact your veterinarian immediately.
- **EXCESSIVE SLEEPING AND LACK OF ACTIVITY:** If your kitten is a lot less playful or active than usual, she may be going through a growth spurt. However, if she is sleeping excessively as well as showing other signs of illness, contact your veterinarian.

You'll want your kitten to become a cat that relates well to people and is a friend and companion. Keep in mind, though, that cats have a very short socialization phase — the first four to 16 weeks of life are a critical time for behavioural and social development.

Getting Social





People

People come in all different shapes and sizes, and your kitten should have the opportunity to encounter them all.

Get her used to strangers, but be careful that they don't scare or overwhelm her with a strong show of affection.

Your kitten should be socialized with children as early as possible, as she may reject them later if she hasn't become used to them early on. If there are children at your house, make sure to teach them that your kitten is not a toy and playtime must end when the kitten gets tired.

Other Cats and Pets

Because smell is the most important sense for cats, before introducing your kitten to any other cats you may have in your home, it's a good idea to transfer some of their scents to your kitten's coat.

Mix the scents by first stroking your resident cat and then the kitten's without washing your hands.

If you've got other pets in the house, introduce your new kitten to them gradually, and separate them at any sign of aggression. Acceptance can take time, so don't ever leave them unsupervised until you're certain they're getting along well.

Rea Body



Understanding Your Kitten's Language

Is your kitten trying to tell you something?

By learning how to interpret your kitten's body language, you can interpret your kitten's intentions.

Meows

LOW-PITCHED: She's uncomfortable or unhappy for some reason.

HIGH-PITCHED: She's happier, and if she keeps repeating them, she wants your attention.

Hisses and Growls

Your kitten is frightened. Usually happens during tense encounters with other animals.

If your kitten is **HISSING AND GROWLING** excessively, consult with your veterinarian.

Rolling Over

Complete **TRUST** in you. Wants attention.

Tail

If it's **STRAIGHT UP**, she's happy.

If it's **TUCKED** between her legs, she's frightened.

If it's **SWISHING** broadly from side to side, she's annoyed or getting impatient.

If it's moving rapidly from **SIDE TO SIDE**, she's agitated.

If it's **TWITCHING**, she's excited and curious.

Purring

Usually means she's **HAPPY**.

If she's rubbing against you and purring loudly, it's a **SIGN OF AFFECTION** or she's asking for something, like food.

Cats that are ill or anxious will sometimes purr as a **COMFORT**.

Collar & Identification

Collar

Your kitten's first collar should be a safety collar made for cats that will pull away easily in case the collar gets snagged. It should fit with enough slack to get two fingers in-between the collar and her neck, but not loosely enough to slide over her head. Be sure to check the size every few days while your kitten is growing.

You can help your kitten get used to her collar by initially making her wear it for only short periods of time. If she seems uncomfortable or struggles and scratches at it, don't be concerned — it should only take a few days for your kitten to get used to it. When she begins to ignore her collar, you can leave it on her all the time.

Identification

In case your kitten gets lost, it's important to attach an identification tag with your name and contact info to your kitten's collar.



**Ask
your vet**






how microchipping
and tattooing can
help keep your
kitten safe.



Looking Good

Grooming is important for your pet's health, and a nice way for you to spend quality time with your kitten.

HERE ARE SOME TIPS:

-  Establish a regular location and time for grooming
-  Brush in the direction of hair growth — brushing against the hair pattern may be uncomfortable for your kitten
-  Ask your veterinarian to show you how to trim your cat's nails
-  Long-haired cats should be groomed every day to help prevent painful mats and knots, while short-haired cats may only need grooming once a week
-  While you normally don't need to clean a cat's ears, use grooming time as a chance to check them for dirt, debris or redness

Upon your kitten's arrival in her new home, immediately show her where her litter box is located.

Litter Box Training

For a single-cat home, you'll need a minimum of two litter boxes for easy accessibility. Watch your kitten closely at first, and be sure to put her in there after meals or if you see her sniffing around, crouching or generally behaving like she needs to go.

Accidents

Remember, accidents happen, but don't punish her. Rather, praise her when she does use the litter box and maybe offer her a small reward, and you'll soon be back on track.

Making Adjustments

If your kitten won't use the litter boxes provided, you may need to make them more appealing. Consider:

-  Switching to another brand of litter
-  Moving the boxes to a quieter area
-  Providing litter boxes with lower sides
-  Discontinuing the use of deodorants
-  Adding or removing covers to the boxes
-  Cleaning them more frequently

Do

- 🐾 Put litter boxes in quiet, calm locations that are easy for your kitten to reach, away from noisy household appliances
- 🐾 Place your kitten's litter box away from her bed in a spot that's reasonably private
- 🐾 Empty the tray regularly — your kitten won't want to use it if it's dirty
- 🐾 Scoop out your kitten's litter boxes daily and change the litter as needed



Don't

- 🐾 Use disinfectants and bleach to clean the litter box — these substances are toxic to cats, so it's best to only use hot water and detergent
- 🐾 Attempt to clean the litter box if you are pregnant
 - Get someone else to clean out the tray or make sure you wear rubber gloves and wash your hands thoroughly afterwards
 - This minimizes the risk of toxoplasmosis, which is very rare, but can cause serious problems to unborn babies



Check out HillsPet.ca/HealthyAdvantage for lots more great information, too.

Disciplining Your Cat

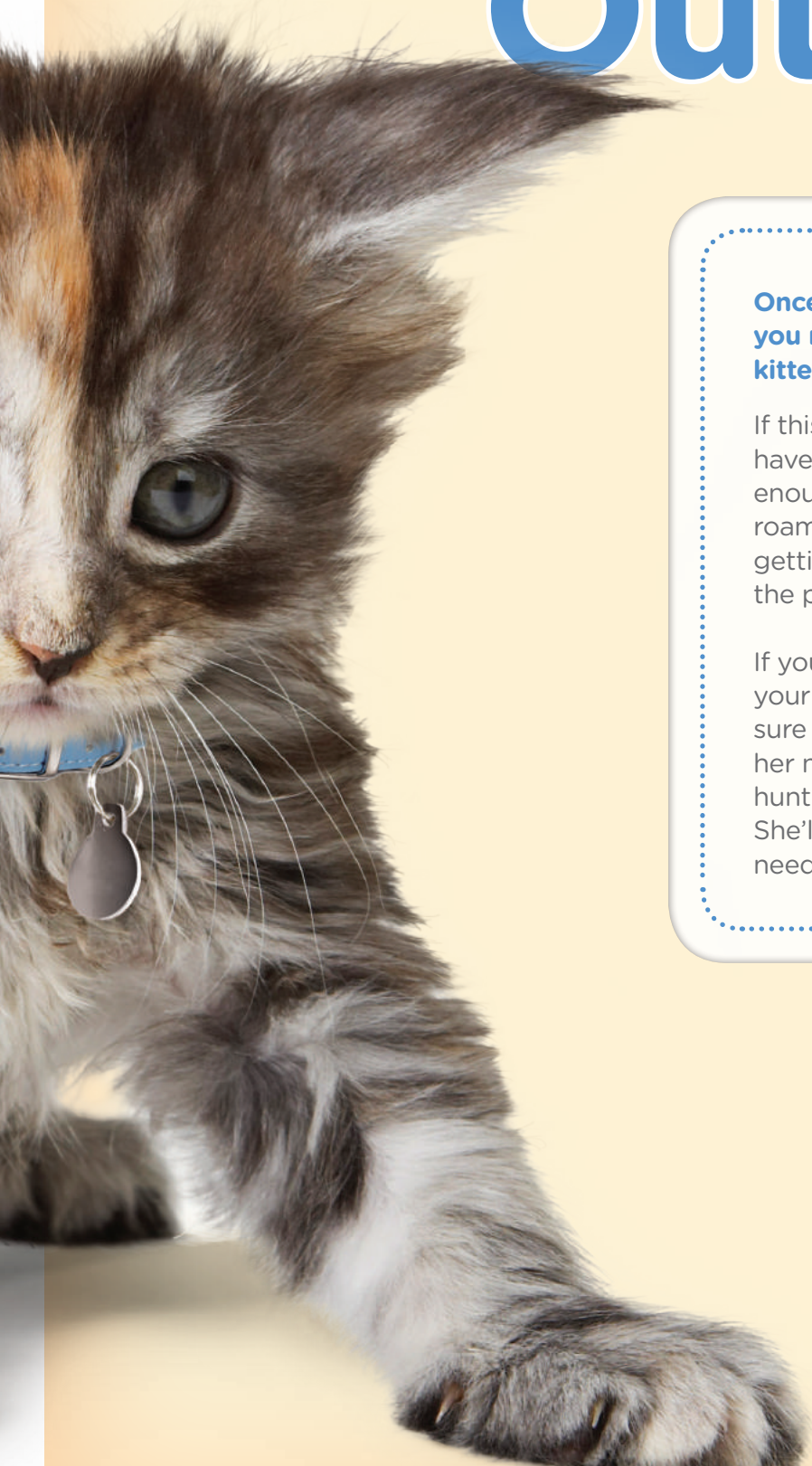
Too often, pet owners resort to punishments like scolding or physical corrections when they believe their kitten has stepped out of line.

However, this can bruise your relationship and lead to more serious problems, such as aggression.

If you need to interrupt a behaviour, like scratching furniture, use a spray bottle or make a sharp noise by tapping a tabletop. Avoid doing anything that makes your kitten act frightened or reluctant to approach you.



Indoors or Outdoors



Once your kitten is fully vaccinated, you may decide to start letting your kitten go outdoors.

If this is the case, you're unlikely to have to worry about her getting enough exercise. She'll instinctively roam, hunt, climb and explore — getting quite a workout in the process.

If you choose an indoor life for your kitten, you'll need to make sure your pet still gets an outlet for her natural predatory instincts like hunting, climbing and scratching. She'll also need exercise. All these needs can be met through play.

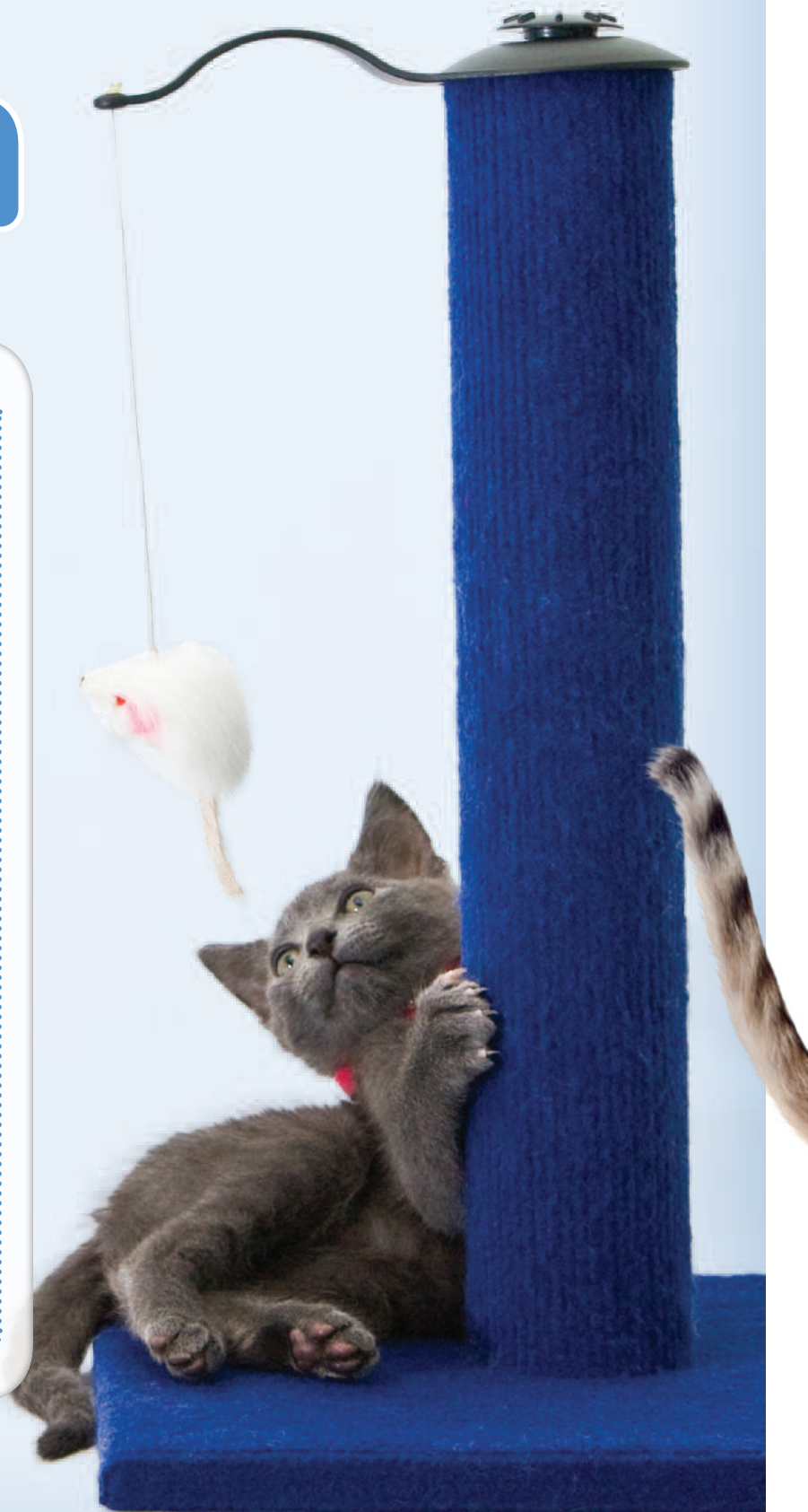
**Ask
your vet**
for guidance before
letting your cat
outdoors.

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Game On

The best games and toys for your cat will encourage her to stalk, pounce, chase and bat objects with her paws in a safe way.

-  She'll love toys that move, so toys on a string are likely to be a big hit — however, to make sure she doesn't choke, your kitten should always have supervision when playing with string toys
-  You can also buy mechanical toys for her to chase around
-  For kittens that like to climb and hide, get an activity center
-  Don't forget a scratching post — not only will it tone your kitten's shoulders and back, but it could even save your furniture



Becoming an Adult

Once your cat has her first birthday she's not a kitten anymore — she's an adult.

She may still act like a playful kitten, but her needs will have changed in the following areas of her life.

VACCINATIONS:

At approximately 15 months of age, your vet will recommend a booster vaccination. This is also a good time to update your cat's flea and worming treatments.

SPAYING & NEUTERING:

If you haven't already, ask your veterinarian about the benefits of spaying or neutering your cat.

EXERCISE:

Regular exercise is essential to keep your cat fit and healthy. Plus, it keeps her mind active and happy, too.

NUTRITION:

Now that she's fully grown, your cat needs grown-up food. In fact, continuing to feed her kitten food may cause her to become overweight. Your vet can advise you on your kitten's nutritional requirements and recommend the best Hill's® adult food for her unique needs.



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