

Congratulations on adopting your new cat! Getting your newly adopted cat home and settled is an exciting time and it's important to make the transition smooth for her, for you and for your household.

BE PATIENT • Keep in mind that your new cat has likely experienced a lot of change. She is coming into a new home and new family, so take things slow. If she appears unsure or scared, start her out in a small, quiet room with her litterbox, food, water, scratching post and a cat bed. Don't worry if it takes a few weeks or months for a new cat to fully settle in.

HELP HER GET ACQUAINTED • If there are other cats in your household, a slow and planned approach to introductions can help set you and your pets up for success.

Try keeping your two cats in separate rooms to allow them to get used to new sounds and scents. You can try feeding them on opposite sides of a door to help form a positive associations. Then slowly allow the cats to spend supervised time together.

If introducing your new cat to your dog, a baby gate is a helpful tool. This will allow them to see each other but prevents contact. Leash your dog so that you can lead him away from the gate if he becomes too focused on your new family member.

NURTURE HER NATURAL INSTINCTS • Cats scratch to stretch, maintain their nails and mark their territory. To help keep your cat from scratching your furniture, give her a scratching post and provide positive reinforcement whenever she uses it.

TRAIN HER • Most cats will learn to use the litter box fairly quickly. As a general rule, you should have at least 1.5 litter boxes per cat. So for one cat, you need two litter boxes; two cats, three litter boxes. If your cat stops using her litter box, contact your vet to rule out any potential health problems.

HELP HER FEEL AT HOME • Establishing a routine and creating boundaries can help your cat understand what to expect and when (such as mealtime). In turn, this gives her a sense of security. Also, be sure she has her own space, like a bed or perch, where she can go to rest and relax.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR CAT'S HEALTH

Becoming familiar with the signs of normal health helps you notice any changes that may signal it's time to visit your veterinarian. If you notice any changes in your cat's health or behavior, consult with your veterinarian.

EYES • Eyes should be clear and bright with no red or yellow discoloration, tearing or cloudiness. If discharge collects in the corners of her eyes, clean them with a cotton ball moistened with warm water.

EARS • Ears should be free of discharge and odor. Have your vet show you how to routinely clean her ears with cotton balls (not cotton swabs) moistened with water.

MOUTH • Healthy gums are pink, with no redness or swelling at the tooth margins. Teeth should be free of tartar build-up and she shouldn't have bad breath.

NOSE • Your cat's nose should be clean and free of any discharge.

SKIN & COAT • Her skin and coat should be free of lumps, tumors, fleas and ticks. A normal coat is smooth, thick and shiny, free of greasiness, dandruff and bare patches.

LEGS • Heck your cat for swollen joints and inspect feet between the toes for excess hair, objects lodged there and the condition of her nailstoies for excess hair, objects lodged there and the condition of his nails.

