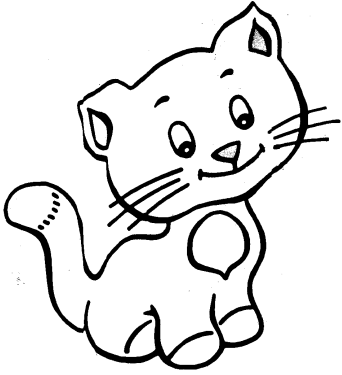


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## Choosing a Kitten



When choosing your kitten, it may help to consider the following:

**C o a t**  
Longhairs  
a r e

attractive but some are difficult to groom needing “dematting” regularly.

**Temperament** Oriental breeds tend to be more “dog-like” in behaviour. The Burmese is particularly good -natured. Tortoiseshells are renowned for their quick tempers. Many less well known breeds have particular characteristics.

**Sex** May be important with multi-cat households. Even neutered males may spray urine to mark territory if with other cats.

**Age** All pedigrees should be 12 weeks of age and fully vaccinated when sold. “Domestic” cats are usually eight or nine weeks old when rehomed.

### Which one?

Selecting your kitten from the litter can be

difficult. Avoid “the runt”, or any kitten with runny eyes, diarrhoea or that looks miserable. Ultimately there is only one thing of importance: temperament. Do not be tempted to choose the nervous kitten any more than the bully.

## The First Days

**Diet:** Do not make any changes to your kittens existing diet for at least a few days to minimise stress, however, avoid milk, even if previously fed, as it often leads to diarrhoea.

**Mixing with other cat(s)** Fortunately kittens do not usually present a threat to older cats, who are more likely to run away from them than fight them. Nonetheless meetings must be supervised

and it may take several weeks for the older cat to get used to the kitten.

**Check Up** It is a good idea to have your new kitten checked up by a vet as soon as possible to ensure no obvious inherited or contagious defects or disease. It is very difficult to take back if you have owned it a few days.

**Vaccines** Kittens need two vaccines usually three weeks apart, the second being given at

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## Health Matters

not less than twelve weeks of age. We normally vaccinate against:

**Flu:** Herpes and Calici viruses both can cause lifelong disease in cats resulting in conjunctivitis, corneal and oral ulceration, gingivitis and snuffling.

**Enteritis:** a usually rapidly fatal, viral gastroenteritis.

**Chlamydia:** a bacterial disease resulting in marked conjunctivitis, some sneezing and reproductive problems. Being bacterial the disease is treatable but only with difficulty.

**Leukaemia:** an AIDS-like virus contracted from the mother or mutual grooming with other cats. Leukaemia may result in an immune deficiency or cancer of the white cells.

### Other Diseases

**Diarrhoea:** all too common, and often difficult to control. Although some cases are infectious (coronavirus, salmonella etc.) the more persistent cases are often dietary. or the result of damage to the intestine causing a

**Do not forget to get your kitten insured against illness and accident. Contact the surgery for details.**

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malabsorption. Kitten diarrhoea should be treated promptly.

**Parasites:** Kittens acquire roundworms from their mothers in the larval form. Regular deworming is needed until one year of age. Fleas are also a frequent accessory to your kitten, with few insecticides being licensed at an early age. *Frontline* is currently the best treatment for the kitten. In addition you should treat the home, since fleas lay some 20 eggs daily in the home which turn into the minute caterpillar larval stage and proceed to burrow into carpets and soft furnishing. *Program* or *Acclaim* are the best products for their eradication. Both are available from the surgery. Many kittens are burdened with ear mites - little creatures that inhabit their ear canals - these can be treated with insecticidal drops.

**Diets** There is a wealth of commercial kitten diets available, both dry and canned. They are higher in calories, protein and minerals and vitamins than adult food, so make sure an older cat doesn't eat them- it will get fat! We would recommend a dry food for consistency, convenience, digestibility and perhaps most importantly a less offensive litter tray. There is probably no better kitten food than Science Diet.

#### NEUTERING

It is advisable to neuter both male and female kittens at six months of age. Females will start

“coming on heat” from six months of age. During the heat they may stop eating, roll around as though in pain, call repeatedly and attempt to get out. You will find the local Tom cats camping out on your doorstep. Each heat lasts about two weeks and is repeated every three weeks.

Male cats are neutered to prevent their natural territorial behaviour that results in spraying urine and fighting other cats. Such fights are the usual means of transmission of the feline AIDS virus.

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# You and Your



**Hamilton Pet Clinic**  
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116 Regents Park Road  
Finchley N3 1433 0181 343

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