



Foster Care Manual for Cats and Kittens



Introduction

Thank you for joining the Chippewa Humane Foster Program! Our foster care program was established to provide animals with temporary homes until they are ready to be placed up for adoption. By opening your heart and home, you will be providing a safe environment to prepare them for adoption. Whether it be orphaned kittens, a pregnant cat, or a shy cat who needs more socialization, all these animals need a foster home for different reasons and we appreciate you giving them a temporary home. Caring for foster animals can be a lot of work, but it is also very rewarding and there are always hundreds of these guys depending on people like you!

Thank you for helping us save lives in our community!



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Fostering Process

Notification

The Health & Wellness Coordinator will maintain a list of foster homes to contact directly when a match comes up. Please notify them of any particular interest (Kittens, scared cats, etc.) or any type of cat you are not interested in fostering.

Pickup

You will make an appointment with the Foster Coordinator to pick up the kittens and notify them of the need for any supplies. Bring your carrier with you or let us know if you need one provided, we would be happy to send you home with one. You will be provided with any supplies that you need, so just let us know ahead of time so we have things ready for you at pickup.

Follow-Up Appointments

Generally speaking, kittens will need an appointment about every three weeks. Appointments for older cats are on a case-by-case basis so will be discussed before you take them home or as needed. We attempt to schedule these at your preceding visit but things can change quickly in 3 weeks. Please contact the Health & Wellness Coordinator to make these appointments.

Adoption

All cats in foster care will return to the shelter before being adopted. This is so we can do a final health exam on them and make sure they have all the vaccinations/deworming they need before leaving. If you have any pictures of your foster animals that you would like to send to the Health & Wellness Coordinator that would be helpful as many times they are nervous/scared for the first week when coming back to the shelter and it can slow down the adoption process. Any information on them is greatly appreciated and will be used to help them find a home suited to their needs.



The Basics

Feeding

Moms and all weaned kittens under the age of six months should have access to dry kibble that is formulated specifically for kittens. Here at Chippewa Humane, we feed Purina Kitten Chow.



Moms and kittens over the age of three weeks should be offered canned food daily. We feed any kind of wet food that is donated, as most cats are not picky on the brand. Young kittens transitioning to hard food after weaning do better with the pate version of wet food as it is easier for them to eat versus a chunky wet food. All cats and weaned kittens should have access to fresh water at all times.



Cats 6 months and older should be fed adult food. We feed Purina Cat Chow unless they are on a prescription diet, which we will notify you of and provide you with.



Cleaning

Cats can be messy, but this is especially true for kittens as they are learning to eat or use the litter box. If a kitten is dirty, it is best to use a warm damp cloth to spot clean them. This is both safe and more natural to them as this mimics the feelings of how their mother would bathe them. If you absolutely must give kittens a full bath, use warm water and make sure they are completely dry before leaving them. You can use a blow dryer on the lowest setting or place them on a heating pad on a low setting to help them dry.

Adult cats don't usually need help in this area, but if they do for some reason, try to spot clean them as best you can. If you absolutely need to give them a bath, focus on the area that's dirty instead of the entire cat as it can be a little less stressful than a full bath. For example, if an adult cat has diarrhea and gets some crusted on its leg, spot clean it the best you can or soak the leg in water to help loosen the crusted area and clean the leg.

Litter Box Training

Begin to provide a litter box when kittens start to eliminate on their own. Use a box that the kittens can easily get into (a meat tray or cat food box works well) and use just a small amount of litter at first. Keeping the box clean will encourage the kittens to continue using it. Kittens will not dig and bury their elimination until about six to eight weeks of age.



Number of Litter Boxes

The general rule is one box for every cat plus one, so in a two-cat household there should be at least three litter boxes. With a litter of young kittens (under eight weeks of age) you can use one to two boxes for the entire litter. Some cats prefer to defecate in one box and urinate in another. Some cats will not use a box that has been soiled by another cat. Provide many options for success.

Type of Litter Box

For an adult cat the litter box should be a minimum 22" x 16" in size. The bigger the litter box, the more comfortable the cat will be while using it. Each litter box should have an average of 2"-4" of litter so your cat(s) can adequately scratch around and cover once they have eliminated. Cats will also have depth preferences, so try to determine if your cat prefers more or less litter in the box. Avoid using plastic litter box liners. Some cats find the texture of the plastic irritating and it will cause them to stop using their box. Some cats prefer open litter boxes while others will be comfortable using covered litter boxes. If using a covered litter box, ensure that the cat is not bothered by other cats while using it. Having only one entry/exit area prevents the cat from escaping should they feel threatened or unsafe while eliminating. Covered boxes also trap the odors inside creating an "outhouse effect" if not regularly cleaned.

Litter Boxes for Kittens

Make sure the sides of the litter box are short and the kitten can easily gain access to the litter box. For very small kittens a litter box may need to be modified by using a small tray or pan until the kitten is big enough to access a real litter box. Do not expect your kitten to travel far distances to use the litter box. They need to have easy access to their toilet area. Cat Attract litter can help train your kitten to use their litter box. Use positive reinforcement when your cat or kitten uses their litter box. This will help them to learn that using their litter box earns treats, play, and love. Place the litter box in an easy to access area, no more than 10 feet from their bed/food/etc. Don't place their litter box too close to their food. We're guessing that you wouldn't like to eat your dinner next to the bathroom, and neither do kittens!

Cleaning the Litter Box

You must scoop all boxes once or twice a day. Frequency will vary depending on the number of cats living in your home compared to the number of litter boxes. The entire box should be dumped weekly and washed out with hot water and dish soap. Do not use harsh chemicals that could leave a scent behind that would offend the cat.

Life Skills

Spend time with your kittens! Generally, we recommend at least one hour of time spread throughout the day in at least three separate sessions. Kittens should be

socialized to a variety of people. Set the goal of having them meet seven to ten new people while you have them.

You can also spend quiet time with them. For example, read to them or quietly to yourself, or watch a movie. Expose them to the sights and sounds they will experience in their adoptive homes. You should also prepare them for the more challenging things that they will face. For example, practice gently holding their feet to practice nail trims or use food or toys to go in and out of a crate.



Preparing Your Home for Fosters

At bare minimum, kittens need the following essentials in their space:

- A low sided litter box
- Soft bedding
- Toys
- Water bowl
- Dry food bowls
- Wet food bowls

Depending on the age of the kittens, they might also need a heat source, Snuggle Kitty, or other necessities as well.

Where to house your kittens

You must provide a clean, safe environment for your foster cats/kittens. We recommend that you always start your kittens in a non-carpeted, easily sanitized room in the unlikely event that your kittens have a contagious illness that cannot be removed from carpeting. If you end up with a contagious illness in a carpeted room, you will either have to have the carpet professionally cleaned and sanitized, or wait 6 months – 1 year to use the room again as a foster room, depending on the type of illness. The ideal space for a kitten is either a spare bathroom or a small non-carpeted spare room (bedroom, office, etc.) You can also house them in a large dog kennel if you don't have a spare room to keep them in.

Kitten-proofing the space

Kitten-proofing your home is much the same as child-proofing it! That means hiding or removing cords, removing small items that kittens can choke on, etc. If you choose to use a spare bathroom or bedroom, here are some crucial steps you need to take.

To begin, your foster room should ideally be COMPLETELY cleared out and only consist of basic cat necessities (i.e bed, food, water, litter box, and toys). Kittens love to play with anything they can get their paws on and could be injured by heavy or sharp items.

If you are using a bathroom

Remove all toiletries and decorative items from the bathtub, counters, or any other surface the kittens can access. If you have a shower curtain, wrap it up high on the shower curtain rod so the kittens can't climb up it and injure themselves. Remember to keep the toilet lid closed at all times!



If you are using a spare room

Ideally the room will be empty (no furniture), but we realize this isn't always possible. If furnished, be sure to "kitten-proof" any furniture they might be able to climb under, crawl on top of, etc. Kittens are like little Houdini's and will get themselves into trouble, get stuck, or possibly even hurt themselves if given the chance. Stuff towels and blankets into open spaces under dressers, check to make sure there aren't holes in the bottom of mattresses, close closet doors, etc.

Consider protecting your furniture with sheets or plastic table covers. Kittens can be messy, especially when they're learning to use the litter box! Make sure sheets/covers are securely tacked down so kittens can't get under them.

Kittens might chew on electrical cords resulting in burns or even death. Protect your electrical cords with plastic tubing, or unplug and remove anything with a power cord, if possible.

Kittens can choke on small items. Keep rubber bands, paper clips, needles, – anything kitty can swallow – out of reach. Keep plastic bags, which can cause suffocation, out of reach. Secure any heavy items that could fall and potentially injure them.

If you are using a Kennel

If you don't have a room to keep your fosters in that's not a problem at all! We can send you home with a large dog kennel that you can use. It will be large enough to fit a large litter box, food and water bowl while still allowing enough space for kittens to move and play. This is a similar setup to what we use here at the shelter, but at home you can open the door and let them play and explore under supervision and they won't be at risk of getting sick like at the shelter. When kittens are very little we recommend stuffing towels or blankets into the cracks on the side so they don't fall through, especially once they start crawling around!



Kitten Development Chart

Age (wk)	Wt	Feeding Instructions	Average Development
0-1	0.25 lb	Monitor that mom is nursing everyone. If any of the kittens seem in distress, this could mean that they are hungry and may need additional feeding.	Kittens will spend most of the day eating and sleeping. They cannot hear or see yet. They are reliant on their mother or you for warmth, food, and assistance with elimination. Handling should be limited.
1-2	0.4 lb	Kittens will continue to gain all nutrition from the mother or formula.	Kittens will start to move around and their eyes and ears will begin to open. All kittens' eyes are blue at this stage and they are not fully developed yet. They remain unable to regulate their own body heat.
2-3	0.6 lb	Kittens will continue to gain all nutrition from the mother or formula.	Kittens will begin to stand and move around more efficiently. They will begin to play with each other. Gentle handling should happen about an hour a day and be divided into several sessions. Kittens remain unable to maintain their own body heat.
3-4	0.8 lb	Kittens will continue to gain all nutrition from the mother or formula.	Kittens will begin to see well; they may start grooming themselves and begin to show interest in the litter box. They have developed incisor teeth. Kittens still need one more week before they can regulate their own body heat.
4-5	1 lb	Kittens begin to wean... Refer to the "Weaning Kittens" page for specifics.	Kittens should begin litter box training. They will be confidently walking and playing. They will be growing premolars
5-6	1.5 lb	Kittens should be fed four small (one Tbsp) meals of gruel per kitten per day.	The kittens are beginning to play more efficiently. They can wander away from mom now with supervision and she will begin to spend more time away from them. Begin the socialization process.
6-7	1.7 lb	Feed canned food at least three (one Tbsp) meals a day and have fresh, dry food at all times. Watch for any guarding of food and add another feeding station if needed.	Kittens are becoming "tiny cats" and are moving efficiently. Continue practice with the litter box. They will begin to show their adult eye colors and have molars.
7-8	1.9 lb	Offer canned food three times daily and have fresh dry food available at all times.	Continue to socialize, play, and enjoy.
8 +	2 lb +	Offer canned food two times a day and have fresh, dry food available at all times.	Kittens are ready for adoption once they reach two pounds.



Pregnant Cats

When a pregnant cat comes into CHA we generally have very little information about her background. Some cats that appear large may not deliver for weeks, while some that appear average may give birth within a few hours of being placed into your home.



Before placing a pregnant cat in foster, a blood test is completed to determine that the cat does not have feline AIDS (FIV) or feline leukemia (FELV.) There are several other diseases that we are unable to test for and conditions that can arise unbeknownst to us when placing a cat in your care. Consequently, there is some risk to you or to your pets from taking in a cat whose background is unknown. The cat and/or kittens should be kept in a separate room from your resident pets for this reason.

The domestic cat's gestation is approximately 63 days in length. As the gestation period comes to an end the pregnant cat becomes restless, searching for a suitable den or nest in which to deliver her kittens. She looks for somewhere private, quiet and dry. Litter sizes vary, but three to six kittens is average.

Usually ravenous, the pregnant cat's desire for food disappears as she goes into labor. Some cats will hate interference at this point, while some may seem to enjoy having company during their labor. Most will gladly stay in a box provided by the foster parent for the birth of the kittens, but others might try to hide in closets or drawers. If the mother cat attempts to find a different location to give birth, gently put her back in the place you have selected. Usually she will comply, but from time to time a very independent cat will only be happy giving birth in private. The mother cat should be provided with a box that is large enough for her and her kittens, ideally measuring at least two feet by two feet and lined with soft towels, sheets or blankets. (A brand new large litter pan works well)

Labor

When the first stage of labor starts, the mother cat's rate of breathing increases and she may begin to breathe through her mouth and purr rhythmically. This stage may last for hours and the foster parent should not be overly concerned.

Provided that the mother cat is happy, there is no need at this point for interference. It is important to ensure that you have all of the necessary supplies and that the birthing room is warm enough. The room temperature should be at least 72°F, as a cold room can cause hypothermia in the newborn kitten.

A cat may be well into labor before a foster parent even notices. A mother cat often has her kittens in the middle of the night without the foster parent even being aware that she is in labor.



Giving birth is a lengthy process for the average cat. With a typical litter of four kittens, and a typical delay between births of one half hour, the birth of the kittens may last two hours. However, some cats give birth much more quickly. A typical delay of one half hour gives the mother cat time to tend to the newborn kitten before the next arrives. Occasionally, a cat will rest between kittens for up to 24-hours. As long as she is not having contractions there is no need to panic if there is considerable time between kittens.

As labor progresses, there will be some vaginal discharge, colorless at first but later becoming blood tinged. If at any time she has a foul-smelling discharge or if bleeding is profuse, this may be a sign of trouble and you need to call for help. Any sign of bright red blood is also indicative of a need to call for help. Please call the Emergency number provided.

The second stage of labor begins when the mother cat experiences contractions of her abdominal muscles and starts to bear down. Contractions become more frequent, and when they occur about every 30 seconds, delivery is near. The mother cat will repeatedly lick her genital area and may show signs of agitation. You may soothe her by talking to her and gently rubbing her belly.

Birth

The first amniotic sac will soon come into view. In a regular birth, the enclosed kitten will be born within 15 to 30 minutes. Very often, the mother's constant licking will rupture the sac. If this happens you should remain calm and resist the temptation to interfere. If the kitten is being born head first, a few more contractions should release it.

In about one-third of all births, the hind legs emerge first. This is only slightly more difficult for the mother cat than a head-first birth. In a true breech birth (the kitten is arriving hindquarters and tail first) the mother cat may become agitated and turn around repeatedly in attempts to release the wedged kitten.

She may find it easier to bear down if she can push with her hind legs against the box or your hand. Even with this help, the birth may take 20 minutes. The mother cat's persistence will probably ensure delivery. If she should weaken or become distressed, you should be ready to call the emergency number for help. In most births there are no complications, and only in a very few do serious difficulties arise.

There are three main phases that the mother cat goes through once a kitten is born. The first phase will be to break away the birth sac that covers the kitten. Next, she will clean the nose and mouth of the newborn, enabling him or her to take his or her first breath. Lastly the mother cat bites through the umbilical cord, separating the kitten from the placenta. She will ingest the cord up to about an inch from the kitten's belly. The remaining cord should be left alone and will



eventually dry up and fall off on its own. Following this she will often eat the entire placenta. This will provide the mother cat with nourishment. If the mother cat ignores the afterbirth, remove and discard it. After these crucial steps, the mother cat vigorously licks the kitten all over, helping the fur to dry and allowing the kitten to stay warm. The next kitten will soon arrive, and the process will begin all over again.

Problems

Occasionally a new mother does not attempt to remove the sac from the kitten. She may not know what to do or may be too busy with the next delivery. In this case, give her a minute to realize what is needed, but if there is no sign of action, act quickly. Gently remove the membrane, being careful not to pull on the umbilical cord as it can easily cause a hernia. If the mother cat still does not begin to help, carefully cut the cord about one inch from the kitten's belly. Tie the cord off with dental floss at the cut end. Then, rub the kitten dry with a clean towel to remove the amniotic fluid and stimulate breathing. After the kitten is breathing well, place it close to the mother's belly. The kitten will usually find a nipple and begin to suck. This is generally enough to arouse the mother cat's natural instincts to take over.

Apart from a mother cat being unable to deliver a breech kitten, there are two other situations when it is vital to call the emergency number for help. The first situation is one in which the mother has strong contractions for two hours with no sign of a kitten appearing. This may be due to two kittens blocking the birth canal.

The second situation is uterine inertia, when the mother suddenly appears to tire before or after the first kitten is born. This is different from a cat resting between births. She will seem generally exhausted and distressed, and help will be needed.

Occasionally a mother cat is very protective of her kittens. Carefully observe your foster cat before trying to handle her kittens or before putting your hands or face near the birthing place.

If you feel that your pregnant cat has gone beyond the point when she should have delivered her kittens, please call the emergency number provided.

Kitten Development

After the kittens are born, the mother cat will clean herself and then settle down with her newborn kittens. Around this time, remove the soiled bedding and replace it with clean, warm bedding. Clean the box if necessary. Place the kittens back with the mother cat and allow them to nurse. If the mother is not allowing you near her kittens, just let her calm down for a couple hours and try cleaning again later.



The first milk, called colostrum, is only produced for a few days. It is rich in protein and minerals and contains antibodies that protect the kittens from disease. For this reason it is very important that infant kittens nurse from their mother. The kittens will put on weight steadily, gaining as much as a half-ounce per day during the initial period of rapid growth.

Occasionally, a kitten will be pushed out by another kitten when it is attempting to nurse. This is normal, but if the same kitten is repeatedly kept from the nipple it will fall behind in growth and development. A kitten repeatedly pushed away by the mother may suffer a decrease in body temperature. If this occurs, warm the kitten and attempt to place it back with the mother cat. If this does not work, you will need to call for help. You may need to start feeding the kitten yourself. Careful examination of the kitten may reveal a defect such as a cleft palate, or it may just be a "runt."

A kitten will use heat receptors in its nose to find the nipple. Cat milk is high in fat and protein. Kittens compete for the most productive nipple and by two days of age, the kittens know which nipples are most productive. Kittens that latch onto the most productive nipples grow quicker.

At birth, a kitten is totally helpless, unable to even regulate its own body temperature. Within four days it is able to find its mother and crawl to her from two feet away. By two weeks old coordination is sufficiently developed for it to use its front legs, and by three weeks of age the kitten can stand tentatively. By seven weeks of age the kitten leaps, runs, and seems to have developed a near perfect sense of balance. Watching kittens grow is fascinating.



Bottle Baby Kittens

Chippewa Humane receives orphaned kittens from the public at all ages, ranging from 1-day-old kittens to kittens that are very close to being two pounds and are almost ready for adoption. Orphaned kittens require the same care as kittens that have mothers, but in this case, the foster parent must take on the duties of the mother cat.

We recommend two types of feeding for orphaned infant kittens: bottle or syringe. Bottle-feeding takes the longest but provides more satisfaction for the kitten. Syringe feeding is somewhat faster but can be messy. Proper instruction is necessary to avoid aspiration of formula, (when the formula goes through the larynx down the trachea and lungs instead of through the esophagus to the stomach.) Foster parents who are interested in specializing in very young orphans need more time to dedicate to their kittens, since the kittens need to be fed more often.

Environment

Keeping kittens warm is essential to their health! They are unable to regulate their own body temperature until around five weeks of age and will need your help.

Ideal room temperatures:

- Birth to 7 days: 88° to 92°F
- 8 days to 14 days: 80° to 85°F
- 15 days to 28 days: 80°F
- 29 days to 35 days: 75°F
- Older than 35 days: 70°F

You can create a small space for them within this temperature range by placing a heating disk or a heating pad on the lowest setting only in a blanket-covered crate to contain the heat. A thermometer can be used to ensure the air temperature is adequate. It is important to use blankets or towels to cover the heat source to prevent burns and it should not cover the entire floor of the crate so the kittens are able to move away from it if they become too warm.

Getting Ready

Formula should be warm, but not hot, and mixed according to the brand specifications. Test the temperature by dropping some on the inside of your wrist, where the skin is sensitive. You can warm the formula in a cup of hot water or a bottle warmer. Do not place the bottle directly in the microwave! Unused formula should be stored in the fridge and made fresh every one to two feedings. Kittens should be fed a formula that is manufactured specifically for kittens. We can commonly provide these to you as needed. You should not make your own





formula, or offer them cow's milk or any other milk alternatives. These are life threatening to the kittens. Bottle baby kittens have different needs at different life stages. The chart below provides a general guideline for frequency and quantity of feedings. Kittens who are not thriving or are struggling with other illnesses may need more frequent attention.



Age	Weight	Amount Per Feeding	Frequency
<1 week	<5 oz.	2-6 mL	2 hours
1-2 weeks	5 oz.-9 oz.	6-10 mL	2-3 hours
2-3 weeks	9 oz.-12 oz	10-14 mL	3-4 hours
3-4 weeks	12 oz.-1 lb.	14-18 mL	4-5 hours
4-5 weeks	1 lb.-1.2 lb.	18-22 mL	5-6 hours
>5 weeks	>1.2 lb.	Weaning	6 hours

***Never feed a kitten who is cold! If the kitten's temperature is less than 98°F, they should be warmed prior to offering food.**

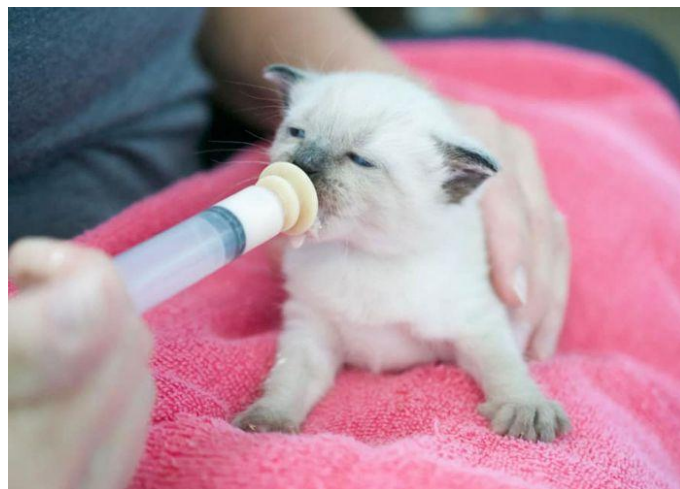
Bottle Feeding

1. Place the kittens on their tummies with their heads slightly tilted up and their necks extended forward. The position should mimic how they would nurse if they were still with their mother. Never feed a kitten on their back like you would a human baby! This can cause aspiration.
2. Hold their heads with your non-dominant hand. Place one finger gently on their throat to feel for them swallowing.
3. Place the nipple in their mouths with your other hand. You may need to try this a few times before they accept it. Do not squeeze the bottle, but rather allow them to latch onto the nipple and begin nursing.
4. The kitten should be allowed to nurse until they pull away from the bottle or until they have consumed an amount that is appropriate for their weight and age.



Syringe Feeding

Some kittens may struggle with the transition to bottle feeding. If you are unable to get a kitten to take a bottle, you can try syringe feeding. For syringe feeding, it is important to go very slow and make sure that the kitten is swallowing. Use a 1 mL syringe for young kittens and when you are new to the process. The small syringe makes it easier to measure the amount that the kittens are getting and it is easier to have a slow delivery of the formula. Use the syringe to put a few drops of formula in the kitten's mouth.



Wait for them to swallow it and add a few more drops. Continue this process until they have received the appropriate amount of food according to their weight. Some kittens will begin to latch on to the syringe. At this point, you can add a Miracle Nipple to the syringe and dispense the formula at the rate that they are nursing. Once your kitten is eating well with this method, you can switch out the syringe for a bottle.

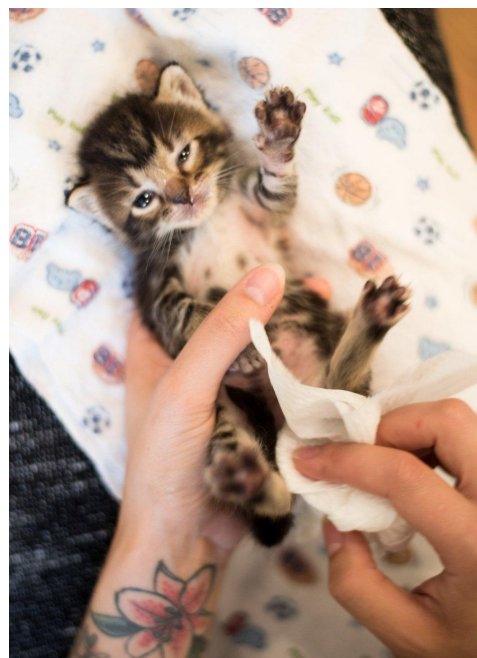
Burping

After feeding your kittens, you will want to burp them. You can do this by rubbing their sides and stomachs or gently patting them on the back. You will not be able to hear it.

Elimination

Kittens under the age of three weeks of age will need assistance with elimination. Kittens should urinate after every meal and defecate once or twice a day. The mother cats normally do this by licking the ano-genital area. When the kittens do not have their mothers, they need our assistance. Use a soft tissue or warm, damp cloth to gently rub the kitten's genitals in a circular motion. Continue this motion for a few extra seconds to allow the opportunity to defecate but keep it short to avoid causing irritation.

Observe the elimination for any abnormalities including blood or diarrhea. Urine that is dark in color may be an indication of dehydration. Stool should be brown to yellow in color and the consistency of soft-serve ice cream. Diarrhea can be exceptionally dangerous in kittens under the age of four weeks and the Health & Wellness Coordinator should be notified



when diarrhea is first seen. If your kitten has not defecated in more than two days, contact the Health & Wellness Coordinator.

Environment

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Hypoglycemia (Low Blood Sugar)

Hypoglycemia can happen in young kittens. It can present as a kitten that is cold to the touch, lethargic, or in respiratory distress. Begin by slowly warming the kitten. They must be warm for their bodies to absorb nutrients. If the kitten is extremely lethargic or collapsed, apply a small amount of Karo or maple syrup to their gums every few minutes until they are more active and alert. This may take several hours. Contact the emergency number provided as soon as possible.

Overall Health

There are several ways that you can tell if your kittens are happy and healthy. In general, your kittens should sleep around 90% of the time the first two weeks. Kittens that are crying or restless may need more to eat or they may be struggling with an illness. Kittens should not be cold to the touch or withdrawing from the other kittens in the group. Contact the Health & Wellness Coordinator if you are experiencing any of these symptoms.



Weaning Kittens

The transition from mom's milk or formula to dry food should take place over the course of a couple weeks. Every kitten is a little different on when they transition, but most should begin this process around four weeks and be at least mostly weaned by six weeks of age. Signs that they might be ready to wean, include biting at the bottle or showing interest in their mom's food.

Diarrhea is common in the weaning process, please refer to the "Common Kitten Health Concerns" section for guidance on when to seek help.

To begin, start with a gruel mix. This should be a smooth mixture of pate canned food and water. You may also add some single ingredient baby food or KMR to entice kittens' interest as needed.

Offer one dish of food per kitten. To encourage the kittens to eat, you can show them the food, use your fingers to place a small amount on their mouths or warm it up a little. If they show no interest, try again in a few days.



Over the course of the next week, gradually decrease the amount of liquid you add to the mixture so that it becomes more thick. Offer them food several times a day following the guidelines on the Kitten Development chart for quantity.

Introduce a separate dish of dry kitten food and leave it with them at all times. You can grind it up with a food processor or wet it down to encourage interest. They should also always have access to fresh water.



Mom and Kittens

Whenever possible, we want to keep mom and her unweaned kittens together. Having mom with the litter also makes the fostering process much easier because she will do most of the work for you! There are a few extra things to be aware of when you have the whole family though.

A Space for Mom

The mother and her family have been through a lot of transition in the time leading up to you bringing them home. She may be feeling a little anxious and unsettled. Create a quiet, warm, and safe space for her to settle in with her kittens. Keep interactions with her and the kittens to a minimum for the first several days.

Understanding Her Behaviors

Mom may feel a little more on edge or cranky than normal. Observe her body language for signs that she may need more space. Watch for tensing, swishing tail, dilated eyes, pinned ears, moving away, hissing or growling. She has an instinctual job to protect her family, and she may see you or other animals as a threat. Always keep other pets away from the mom and her babies and limit your contact with her if she is showing these signs. Contact the Health & Wellness Coordinator if you feel unsafe or it does not improve over a week's time.

Maternal Neglect

Maternal Neglect is when the mother is not caring for her kittens enough for them to thrive. They can suffer from hypothermia and may die if it is not caught. There are many reasons a mother may reject a kitten that are out of our control but one main cause is stress. Things to watch for include, a mother who is never near the kittens, does not frequently groom or nurse them, or the kittens are crying and she does not respond to this. Contact the Health & Wellness Coordinator if you suspect maternal neglect.



Common Behavior Concerns

Even with the best set-up and the most attention to detail, occasionally there are kittens that struggle with some behavior. Each kitten is unique but these tips are a great place to start. Start here, but if the problems continue, please contact the Health & Wellness Coordinator for further guidance.

Not Using the Litter Box

Most kittens learn how to use the litter box on their own but some need more help figuring it out. Litter box issues in kittens over the age of six weeks should have the following intervention plan to help kittens learn where to go.

1. Provide extra litter boxes. Place them in the areas that the kittens are going.
2. Scoop the litter boxes more often, some kittens are more picky about a soiled litter box.
3. Try other kinds of litter. Set up several litter boxes with different options. Try clay, pellets, and potting soil. You can also try a special litter that attracts the kittens to it, called "Kitten Attract."
4. If the kittens are going on a particular item, remove that item from the room.
5. If none of these changes are helping, try confining the kittens to a smaller space. A large dog crate works well. We can gradually increase their space once they have a better idea of the litter box.
6. Ask for help from the Health & Wellness Coordinator if the problem continues despite intervention.

Rough Play

Kittens should be taught how to play without making contact with your hands. We never want to encourage kittens to bite, even gently. In order to encourage positive, safe play, use toys that move the kitten away from your body such as wand toys. When a kitten does bite or scratch you, make a loud "ow" sound and stop the play. You can resume play again after a few seconds.

Scratching the Furniture

Kittens should all be provided with appropriate surfaces to scratch and stretch. In the event that kittens are scratching on other surfaces, there are several options to deter them. To help the scratching post seem exciting, use toys to guide them to scratch on those places or try catnip for older kittens. You can also deter them from the undesired areas with double-sided sticky tape or by moving or covering that surface.



Common Health Concerns

All kittens will receive health exams before going into foster care and any known health concerns will be discussed with the foster parent. However, it is possible for symptoms to develop after the kittens are taken home. Because of this, it is very important to keep your foster kittens in a separate area, with separate bedding and without contact to your other household animals. CHA is not responsible for treating any other animals in the foster home.

Diarrhea

Diarrhea is common in young kittens that have growing and sensitive bodies. Many things can cause diarrhea including a diet change while weaning. If a kitten has diarrhea and is over four weeks of age, otherwise eating, acting normally, and gaining weight, then it is ok to monitor and give it a chance to resolve on its own for the first 24 hours. If the kitten is vomiting, losing weight, lethargic, inappetent or has unresolved diarrhea, then you should contact the Health & Wellness Coordinator for guidance.

Vomiting

Similar to diarrhea, vomiting has many causes. In some cases, a kitten may vomit from eating too rapidly. If you suspect this is the situation for your kitten, try offering smaller and more frequent meals.

If the kitten appears healthy otherwise and only has one or two vomiting episodes, then it is ok to keep an eye on it. However, if the kitten vomits repeatedly, the Health & Wellness Coordinator should be contacted. Contact is also needed if the kitten also has diarrhea, weight loss, lethargy or a poor appetite.

Upper Respiratory Infection (URI)

URI is simply a kitten cold that is generally caused by a virus. The stress of being in a new environment can make the kittens more susceptible to URI.

URI generally appears as sneezing, discharge from the eyes or nose, congestion and coughing, or swollen eyes.

Mild cases of URI do not need to be treated. If the kitten has clear nasal discharge and is eating, gaining weight and otherwise acting normally, then no action is required but to monitor them.

Most mild URIs resolve on their own within seven to ten days. The Health & Wellness Coordinator should be contacted if the URI has not resolved or if the kitten has lethargy, poor appetite, weight loss, colored nasal discharge, severe congestion or a fever.



The two most common medications we used to treat a URI are Clavamox and Azithromycin. Clavamox is a white liquid that is given twice daily and must be refrigerated. Azithromycin is a pink liquid that is given once a day and does not need to be refrigerated. If your kittens need antibiotics, the dosage will be provided to you when you pick the medication up. Typically we give the medication for 7-10 days but it may take longer for the URI to resolve so contact the Health and Wellness Coordinator if this is the case as we may need to adjust dosage.



Fleas

Whenever possible, kittens will be treated for fleas before going to a foster home. In situations where the kitten is too young to receive flea medication, we will give them a bath with Dawn dish soap and pick out any fleas found. This may need to be repeated as it doesn't always get every flea, but typically kills most of them.

Ear Mites

When a kitten has ear mites, they will have crusty black debris in the ears. The ears are often itchy and may have a smell to them. Treatment is simple with medication. Sometimes, more than one treatment is needed to completely clear the ears. At CHA we treat them with an Ivermectin solution that is given in both ears. Once the medication has been given, the ears can not be cleaned for two weeks so we try to clean them out the best we can before giving the medication.

Sometimes there will still be some debris leftover, especially in cases of severe ear mites, but after two weeks we will clean them out and determine if they need a second treatment or not.



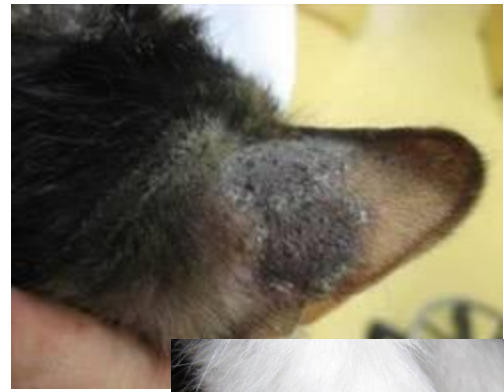
Lice

Lice are rather uncommon in kittens in our area. Lice will look like white flecks on the kitten's fur. Unlike dandruff that can be easily brushed away, lice eggs are stuck to the hairs and are not easily removed. A combination of a topical medication and combing will cure it. Cat lice is not contagious to humans. Contact the Health & Wellness Coordinator if you suspect your foster kitten has lice.



Ringworm

Ringworm is also rather uncommon in our area. It is a fungal infection that is commonly found on the head and legs of a kitten. The skin will look dry and the hair will be missing in these areas. Ringworm is treatable and typically involves medicated baths. Contact the Health and Wellness Coordinator if you suspect your foster kitten has ringworm.



Stress and Body Language

When a cat is feeling stressed and becoming anxious they exhibit body language cues that will convey this message. Sometimes the message may be difficult to interpret since most of the cat's body language is not intentional but rather a reflexive response to a specific perceived stimulus. Cats have an innate fight or flight response to fearful situations and would prefer to flee and hide from a perceived threat. They would rather avoid confrontation, but if feeling trapped and/or threatened, they will fight.

When a cat is becoming stressed and is feeling anxious they may exhibit several body language cues while trying to cope with their emotions. In an attempt to cope with a situation, cats may exhibit several different signals that may include:

- Yawning
- Lip licking
- Freezing
- Blinking
- Grooming
- Avoidance or looking away
- Hiding
- Vocalization
- Dilated pupils
- Facial whisker twitching
- Tail tucking or hair standing on end
- Out of context play behavior

Tips for Handling a Fearful or Stressed Cat

Never use punishment, physical or verbal, such as yelling at the kitten/cat and then swatting at it to correct a behavior. This will only reinforce fear in your kitten/cat and teach her to mistrust your actions. It may also encourage your kitten/cat to become aggressive.

Provide a safe place for the cat to hide. Observe where it likes to hide and feels safe. Provide easy access to that space or create a similar one for it to retreat to when needed. Make sure the cat has access to food, water and a litter box at all times.

Be sure that the cat has an escape route to its safe place. An escape route only works if the cat knows how to use it. Do not pick a route you have never seen your cat take.

Pay attention to your kitten/cat's body language. If it is displaying threatening behavior, leave the cat alone. Give it space and time to work through the anxiety. The cat should come out when it feels safe. If needed, use food or treats to encourage it to come out of hiding. Go slow and do not force the issue. Avoid direct eye contact. This will make your stressed kitten/cat more anxious and defensive. They will interpret this as a threatening behavior.

If the cat is afraid of a particular person or animal, do not allow that person or animal to approach it. Completely ignore the cat and do not force the issue. If



your cat does take the initiative to approach the person, have them offer it a food treat but do not pet. Continue to ignore the cat after giving the treat. Increase play therapy and mental stimulation when your cat is not behaving fearfully. This will help decrease anxiety and may help strengthen your relationship. Pair the play activity with tasty food rewards to help build confidence.

Feliway spray or a Feliway diffuser may help a nervous or fearful cat to relax. This product is usually provided by the foster care department.

Take a “hands off”, calm approach in helping your fearful cat. Do not force the issue. Patience, time and lots of love are the keys to success. Try to remember how it feels to be scared. You must be kind and understanding of your cat’s feelings.

Additional Ideas:

- Leave a radio on playing soft soothing music.
- Allowing your cat to sniff your fingers and then slowly begin to stroke the cheek. Go in the
- direction away from the face.
- Never reach for or over the cat’s head.
- Use a calm, soothing voice. Do not yell or scream around your cat.



Not Immediately Concerning - Appropriate to monitor

- Upper respiratory infection (mild to moderate)
 - Clear ocular/nasal discharge, sneezing or coughing
 - Kitten is otherwise eating and active
- Poor appetite of less than 24 hours (kitten is otherwise doing well)
- Lethargy (low energy) of less than 24 hours
- Vomiting of less than 24 hours (kitten still active and eating)
- Diarrhea of less than 48 hours (kitten still active and eating)
- Lack of bowel movement for less than 24 hours
- Weight loss of less than 10%

Non-Emergency - Contact Health & Wellness Coordinator

- Upper respiratory infection (severe)
 - Significant ocular/nasal discharge, sneezing or coughing
 - Any degree of signs where the kitten is also lethargic or anorexic
- Diarrhea
 - No stool improvement after 48 hours (if eating and active)
 - Diarrhea of less than 24 hours (if lethargic and anorexic)
- Vomiting
 - No improvement after 24 hours (if eating and active)
 - Vomiting of less than 24 hours (if lethargic and anorexic)
- Poor appetite of over 24 hours
- Lethargy of more than 24 hours
- Lack of bowel movement of over 24 hours
- Weight loss of more than 10%
- Hair loss
- Skin or ear infections
- Swollen or closed eyes (may be an emergency, contact for guidance)
- Mild trauma, pain or lameness
- Mild bleeding that is no longer active
- Seizures (a single, short-lasting one)

Emergency - Requires immediate attention, contact Emergency number

- Unresponsive or collapsed
- Severe trauma or pain
- Labored or difficulty breathing
- No urine production after 24 hours of straining to urinate
- Significant active bleeding
- Seizures (more than 3 in a 24 hour period or one lasting more than 3 minutes)
- Continuous vomiting over 24 hours and unable to hold down food/water



Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Can I let my foster kittens interact with my personal pets?

A: We do the best we can to notify foster parents of all known illnesses that a kitten may have. Unfortunately, they may be carrying a disease or parasite without showing symptoms for quite some time. We highly recommend keeping foster kittens and personal pets separate at all times.

At a minimum, we recommend a two-week quarantine period. Personal pets must be up to date on vaccines, parasite preventatives and be healthy.

Q: How much time will I need to dedicate to fostering kittens?

A: Generally speaking, you should expect to spend between one and two hours a day with your kittens if they are weaned and up to eight hours a day for newborn bottle babies. This may vary with litter size, health, and degree of socialization.

Q: How long will I be fostering each group of kittens?

A: Kittens will need to weigh two pounds and be healthy before they can be spayed/neutered and go up for adoption. This typically happens when they are about eight weeks of age, but it can vary with each kitten's situation.

Q: What are the common reasons that kittens need fostering?

A: The majority of kittens just need time to grow until they are old enough to be adopted. Some kittens may also need socialization or specialized care for an illness or injury.

Q: What if I want to adopt one of my foster kittens?

A: Fosters may adopt a maximum of two of their foster kittens per litter. They will need to notify the Health & Wellness Coordinator, come to CHA to complete the adoption application process, and pay the standard adoption fees.

Q: What if one of my friends or family members wants to adopt?

A: Fosters are encouraged to find adopters for their kittens through friends and family members. The potential adopter should come to the shelter and meet with an adoption coordinator after the kitten is old enough for adoption.



Additional Resources

- www.aspcapro.org-A resource for a variety of topics regarding shelter animals and their care.
- www.maddiesfund.org-Another great resource for a wide variety of information including many how-to videos.
- www.kittenlady.org-The Kitten Lady has several videos for bottle and syringe feeding kittens.
- www.sfspca.org. Cat behavior library including great information regarding kitten socialization.

