



## Reducing the Risks of Feline Obesity

Obesity is the most common nutritional disease of cats. Experts estimate more of all cats are overweight. Obesity prevention and weight reduction lessen the risks of health problems, improve your cat's appearance, decrease future health-care costs, and prolong life. This client education sheet will help you learn more about the risks of obesity and will review your veterinarian's plan for keeping your cat healthy, as well as follow-up with the veterinary health care team.

### Risk Factor Management for Feline Obesity

Obesity exists when a cat weighs 15 percent more than its optimal body weight. Risk factors that predispose an animal to obesity include:

- Overfeeding kittens. This increases the number of fat cells that they have.
- Age. The incidence of obesity increases with age due to reduced lean muscle mass and reduced physical activity.
- Sex. Obesity is more common in females.
- Neutering. Obesity is more common in castrated males and spayed females.
- Client feeding habits. Pets fed home-cooked meals, table scraps, and treats are more prone to obesity.
- Reduced physical activity.
- Overfeeding of highly palatable foods.
- Providing pets with unlimited (free-choice) access to food.

### Effects of Obesity

Detrimental health effects begin when an animal is 10 to 15 percent heavier than its optimal weight. Obesity can shorten a pet's life and predispose the pet to medical problems. Among these are joint and locomotion problems, such as arthritis; respiratory difficulties; high blood pressure; congestive heart failure; liver disease; decreased heat tolerance; increased incidence of skin disease; increased incidence of certain cancers; increased anesthetic and surgical risks; increased incidence of digestive conditions, such as constipation; decreased resistance to infectious diseases; and increased risk of diabetes.

### Detecting Risk Factors

Frequent and complete veterinary checkups are the best means of assessing whether your cat is overweight and suffers from the effects of obesity. An adult cat should weigh no more than it did the first year following maturity. Weight gain trends can usually be found in your pet's medical records at your veterinarian's office. Your veterinarian can also diagnose and treat conditions that you may mistake for weight gain.

## Managing Risk Factors

Although some risk factors for obesity – such as age, sex and breed – can't be altered, you can change others by following your veterinarian's advice for exercise and proper feeding practices. Routine examinations and diagnostic studies are the best ways to detect the effects of obesity on your cat's health.

## Nutritional Plan

Obesity prevention begins when a kitten is young and continues through life. Two causes of obesity are the development of too many fat cells during growth and improper feeding practices. Foods that avoid these harmful excesses and provide proper nutrition for each life stage include Hill's® Science Diet® Kitten Healthy Development Original. Table food, scraps and snacks should not be fed to cats.

As a pet matures and ages, its nutritional needs change. Optimal nutrition should provide for a pet's needs during each stage of its life. Optimal nutrition should also reduce the health risks associated with feeding excess sodium, phosphorus, calcium, protein and calories. Foods that avoid these harmful excesses and provide proper nutrition for each life stage include Hill's® Science Diet® brand cat foods.

If your cat is overweight, your veterinarian may give you special feeding instructions. Foods for reducing weight include Hill's® Prescription Diet® m/d® Feline Weight Loss-Low Carbohydrate-Diabetic, a high-protein, low-carbohydrate food, and Prescription Diet® r/d® Feline Weight Loss-Low Calorie, a balanced high-fiber, low-fat and low-calorie food. For prevention of weight gain in obese-prone cats, your veterinarian may recommend a reduced-calorie, increased-fiber food such as Prescription Diet® w/d® Feline Low Fat-Diabetic-Gastrointestinal.

## Transitioning Food

Unless recommended otherwise by your veterinarian, gradually introduce any new food over a seven-day period. Mix the new food with your pet's former food, gradually increasing its proportion until only the new food is fed.

If your pet is one of the few that doesn't readily accept a new food, try warming the canned food to body temperature, hand feeding for the first few days, or mixing the dry food with warm water (wait ten minutes before serving). Feed only the recommended food. Be patient but firm with your pet. This is important because the success or failure of treatment depends to a large degree on strict adherence to the new food.

---

*Presented as an educational service by*

---



## Home Care Instructions

Client's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Patient's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Medication(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Nutritional Recommendation: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-Up Appointment: \_\_\_\_\_

(Hospital Stamp Area Above)

REGULAR VISITS WILL HELP OUR VETERINARY HEALTH CARE TEAM PROVIDE FOR YOUR PET'S BEST INTEREST.