

Cat-Proofing Your Home

Basic Feline Care



CARE SHEET

Developed with and approved by a Qualified Veterinarian

"Curiosity killed the cat" is not just an old wives' tale. Cats are notorious for getting into small places and getting stuck, or eating odd things and getting sick. Take a cat's-eye tour of your house and yard and make some changes to keep your cat safe. You may think your home is your castle, but, in reality, it's your cat's jungle. Here are some of the most common hazards for pets, and ways to avoid them.

Common Household Dangers

Cats love to play with and may eat a ball of yarn or a dangling string. Pick up strings, dental floss, sewing and craft supplies, rubber bands, and fishing line. Place them in a drawer out of sight and out of reach. Ingesting strings and threads, especially if the needle is still attached, can result in serious complications requiring immediate veterinarian attention.

Tie up dangling drapery pulls and cords on window blinds. Besides ruining them, your cat could get tangled and be injured. . Electrical cords present another irresistible danger. Hide cords from view whenever possible, or spray them with a deterrent (like Bitter Apple or Tabasco sauce).

Cats like to nap in warm, dry places. Shut all doors to washing machines, dryers, and dishwashers to avoid trapping the cat when you turn on the appliance.

Use childproof latches to keep your cat out of cupboards where you store potentially dangerous cleaning products.

A burning candle can ignite your cat's fur as it walks by. Use candles only with great caution. Never leave a burning candle unattended.

Check your window screens. You may be surprised to find that some screens can pop out with almost no effort. A cat that goes out of an upstairs window could be injured in the resulting fall.

Poisonous Substances

The most common household hazard is poisonous plants, such as Dieffenbachia, African violets, azalea, oleander, lilies, and many more. Provide your cat with a good supply of Pet Grass to nibble on... You can spray your houseplants with a mixture of Tabasco sauce and water, or Bitter Apple (available at PETCO) to discourage your cat, but the safest strategy is removing the poisonous houseplants altogether.

Many common household products are toxic to cats. Mothballs, fabric softener sheets, batteries, and cigarettes are all dangerous.

Some food items common in our homes can also harm cats, such as coffee grounds, onions, yeast dough, tomato leaves and stems, salt, macadamia nuts and alcoholic drinks. Keep these out of the reach of your cats at all times.

Medications

Never treat your cat with flea products or dips meant for dogs. They are too strong and could be fatal. Carefully follow instructions on flea control products and don't combine products without talking to a veterinarian or the manufacturer.

NEVER give any medications to your cat without consulting your veterinarian. Keep all medications out of reach, and contact your veterinarian or the animal poison control center immediately if you believe that your cat has ingested a medication. You can reach the Animal Poison Control Center at the following number:

ASPCA National Animal Poison Control Center

Toll Free: 888-426-4435

On the Internet:

<http://www.nappc.asPCA.org/>

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Outdoors Thump on your car hood before starting your car in cold weather. Many a cat has suffered fatal injuries from sleeping in a warm engine compartment. Close up antifreeze and put it out of reach. The smell is very attractive to both cats and dogs, and is fatal. Check under your car to see if it leaks antifreeze. There will be a greenish puddle on the ground if it does. There are now pet-safe alternative products available.

Lawn and garden chemicals and fertilizers pose a danger too. At the very least, let the chemicals completely dry on your lawn and garden before allowing your cat outside.

If your cat gets paint or stain on its paws and then licks them, it could become seriously ill. Call your veterinarian or the National Animal Poison Control Center for instructions on safely removing these substances. Do not use paint thinner on your cat's coat.

Keep mousetraps, ant poison, and mouse poison where your cat can't reach them. Set traps and poisons carefully, or keep your cat completely out of the area. Remember where you put them, and remove them as soon as they are no longer needed. Keep the empty package so you can tell the veterinarian exactly what your pet ate if you have to call in an emergency.

Holiday Hazards A Christmas tree is covered with dangerous cat "toys." Tinsel, ribbons, ornaments, hooks, garland, and blinking lights are all big temptations. A deterrent around the base of the tree will help keep your cat away. Hang hazardous ornaments on the high branches (assuming it can't climb the tree!) Spray ornaments with repellent spray or Bitter Apple, or place tin foil on the floor around the base of the tree.

Candy, especially chocolate, is toxic to your cat. Don't leave it out to tempt either cats or dogs. Pine needles and poinsettias cause a major tummy upset when eaten. Holly and mistletoe are also poisonous.

Table scraps can cause pancreatitis in cats and dogs. Too much fat from greasy turkey or gravy is often fatal. Cooked poultry bones are brittle and can puncture the intestine if swallowed.

Black cats have bad luck on Halloween. Keep your black cat indoors to keep him safe.

Suggested Reading *Cats For Dummies* by Gina Spadafori and Paul Diono, DVM, DACVIM
The Complete Idiot's Guide to Living With a Cat by Carolyn Janik and Ruth Rejnes
ASPCA's Complete Cat Care
How to Get Your Cat to Do What You Want by Warren Eckstein