



## Puppy and Kitten Care 101



Pet lovers may easily insist that their cats and dogs greatly enrich their lives. Both can be loyal and loving companions. This may be why, according to the 2009/2010 National Pet Owners Survey, 62% of (or 71.4 million) U.S. households have pets.

Young animals, however, have very specific needs. From early socialization to specific dietary, veterinary and environmental necessities, puppies and kittens often require more than just a lot of love when it comes to making sure they achieve optimum health and happiness throughout their lives.

West Chelsea Veterinary's own, Courtney Maeda, V.M.D., created the following information guide to help those who may be considering adding a young, furry companion to their homes.

### Socialization Basics

"It's critical to a puppy or kitten's future health that they experience the world they'll be living in early on and in a positive way," says West Chelsea's Courtney Maeda, V.M.D. "Socializations should be as positive, nurturing and stress-free as possible. It isn't about forcing them into new situations, but about carefully exposing them to a wide-range of everyday experiences while closely watching for negative reactions," she says. Proper socialization involves introducing young pets to other animals, people of all ages and sizes, household and outside sounds, modes of transportation, situations, objects and to a variety of surfaces like grass, cement, tile flooring and carpeting. "It's also essential to understand that your puppy or kitten may not always respond favorably to these types of new experiences, and that's okay."

### Dr. Maeda's Top 5 Tips for Successful Socialization

1. Start early by joining a puppy class and by being a part of planned play-dates with friends and their pets.

2. Vaccinate puppies and kittens before allowing them to come into contact with animals of unknown health status to avoid contracting diseases. "The immune systems of young pets are not as developed as those of older animals and we want to make sure that they are healthy and protected," says Dr. Maeda.
3. Let any new introductions occur at the pace your pets feel comfortable.
4. Gradually introduce young pets to television sounds and music, noise-making household appliances, such as blenders, fans, bow-dryers, vacuums and to children's toys
5. Keep encounters as positive as possible by rewarding with treats and lots of verbal and physical praise!

### Puppy and Kitten Diets

Puppies and kittens require diets made up of specific levels of nutrients designed to aid in their growth and development. With such wide varieties and food brands available today, we understand finding the best diet for your pets can be overwhelming. Your veterinarian can work closely with you to create a personalized nutritional plan involving a high-quality diet designed precisely for young pets.

### First Vet Visits

"Whether your new puppy or kitten is adopted from a shelter or purchased from a breeder, scheduling a vet visit should be the first thing a new pet parent does," explains Dr. Maeda. "During the initial visit, they will be examined from nose to tail to make sure they are healthy. This critical examination can reveal health problems that, if left untreated, can lead to serious illnesses that



can sometimes be transmitted to other animals or humans."

New pets will likely start a series of "puppy" or "kitten" vaccinations beginning with their first visit. Your veterinarian will also discuss the benefits of spaying or neutering, dental care, simple grooming habits and monthly parasite preventatives (including heartworm preventative and flea and tick control).

### Creating the Right Environment

Young pets are curious by nature and will benefit from a structured, controlled and safe environment. Your veterinarian can offer advice on developing a secure and nurturing environment that is both physically and mentally stimulating.

"Pet owners can start by puppy and kitten-proofing their homes. This can involve picking up small objects that could be considered swallowing hazards and by removing items they simply don't want chewed. With puppyhood, comes the natural need to chew, so pet owners should be prepared for this," warns Dr. Maeda.



### SAFE ENVIRONMENT CHECKLIST

- Keep all potentially dangerous items out of reach, which can include household chemicals, electrical wiring, string, rubber bands, garbage, sharp objects and both animal and human medications.
- Secure and lock all windows and doors. If you need to keep your windows open, please use screens.
- Close toilet lids, especially after using sanitizing products.
- Remove poisonous plants.
- Avoid giving pets toys that contain string and small parts, which can be choking hazards and lead to foreign body obstructions.
- Provide pets with plenty of drinking water and refresh it daily.
- Ensure surrounding temperatures are comfortable for pets, which may include the use of a heater in the winter and A/C in the summer.
- Closely monitor pets enjoying chewy snacks to see they are actually chewing them, instead of swallowing them whole.
- Keep a variety of toys for pets so that they are continuously stimulated.



## Toxic Foods for Pets

Everybody loves chocolate, right? While chocoholics may insist that's true, giving even a smidgeon of the sweet treat to a pet could cause them a list of serious health issues. In fact, many of the foods and beverages we routinely enjoy can cause harm to our cats and dogs if ingested.

For quick reference, we've created the following "Toxic Foods for Pets" list, which we welcome you to cut-out, post at home or take on the go.

For a more detailed list of toxic foods, please visit our Facebook page at [facebook.com/westchelseavet](https://www.facebook.com/westchelseavet)

- Alcohol
- Avocados
- Caffeine
- Chocolate
- Fatty or Fried Foods
- Grapes or Raisins
- Macadamia Nuts
- Nutmeg
- Onions & Garlic
- Salt
- Artificial Sweeteners
- Tomatoes & Tomato Plants
- Yeast Dough

If you suspect your pet has ingested a toxic item, call West Chelsea Veterinary at (212) 645-2767.

