Making Your Home Safe for a Kitten

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Kittens have a tremendous amount of energy and curiosity. They love to climb into small spaces, jump up onto high shelves, and play with new objects. They run, and leap, and pounce on anything that moves. Because of this normal, instinctive behavior, the average home may contain many hazards for a kitten. The following list will help you keep your kitten safe. Many of the following warnings apply for adult cats as well:

- Know which plants are toxic (Plants Which Are Potentially Poisonous) and eliminate them from your home.
- Store all medications and toxic substances (household cleaners, etc.) in secure cabinets with childproof latches.
- Keep potpourri out of the reach of pets. It contains oils that can be toxic to cats if eaten.
- Toilets with open lids can be hazardous to cats who may jump up and decide to take a drink. A small cat may fall in and drown. Toilet bowl cleaners may leave a poisonous residue, especially the cleaners that are renewed with every flush.
- Never leave a filled bathtub or sink unattended.
- Keep small objects (coins, needles and thread, straight pins, yarn, dental floss, rubber bands, paper clips, hair ties/pony tail holders, etc.) out of your cat's reach.
- Use only safe cat toys; put toys with strings out of your cat's reach between play sessions.
- Keep fishing line and hooks stored out of reach of cats. Veterinarians remove thousands of fishhooks from cats' mouths and paws every year; and fishing line can bunch up and cut through the intestines if swallowed.
- Keep window screens securely fastened and in good repair.
- Cords for drapery and blinds can cause strangulation. Either tie up the excess cords, or cut the loop in the cord.
- Avoid candles and other open fires.
- Heat sources such as wood stoves or fireplaces should be screened off.
- A cat might slip inside a still-warm clothes dryer to sleep. Keep washers and dryers closed. Always check inside before you put clothes in or turn these on! A post-it note or colorful magnet can be a helpful reminder.
- Close the refrigerator or freezer door as soon as you finish taking food out. If you have a second refrigerator or freezer somewhere, make sure that its door is always closed. If it is unused, seal the door shut so that your cat is never able to get into it.
- Be careful in the kitchen - hot stove tops, open oven doors, and toaster ovens can cause burns. Close doors on microwaves after use. Child proof latches will help prevent a kitten from exploring cupboards.
- Avoid or use extreme caution with folding beds, convertible sofas, drawers, and reclining or swiveling chairs – cats may hide under or inside them and be crushed.
- While playing, some cats will chew on electrical cords, which can cause burns in the mouth, electrical shock, or death by electrocution. Tie up loose electrical cords and keep them out of sight. Or, visit a hardware store and buy some plastic electrical runners, which the cords can be inserted into.
- Many human foods can cause problems for pets. Chocolate, coffee, and tea all contain dangerous components called xanthines, which cause nervous system or urinary system damage and heart muscle stimulation. Problems from ingestion of chocolate range from diarrhea to seizures and death. All chocolate, fudge and other candy should be placed out of your cat's reach.

- Grapes and raisins contain an unknown toxin, which may damage the kidneys of cats.
- Tobacco products, including nicotine gum and patches, contain substances that can be toxic or fatal to cats.
- Plastic bags or paper bags with string handles, which can cause your cat's head to become stuck. Many cats have a fascination with plastic.
- String and yarn hold a fascination for cats, but if swallowed can lead to serious complications and a surgical emergency called a linear string foreign body in the intestines. Keep all thread, yarn, string, etc. out of the reach of curious cats.
- Cats may be attracted by meat juices on plastic or aluminum foil left on countertops. If ingested, the plastic or foil

*Unauthorized use of any images, thumbnails, illustrations, descriptions, article content, or registered trademarks of **Foster & Smith, Inc.** is strictly prohibited under copyright law. Site content, including photography, descriptions, pricing, promotions, and availability are subject to change without notice. These restrictions are necessary in order to protect not only our copyrighted intellectual property, but also the health of pets, since articles or images that are altered or edited after download could result in misinformation that may harm companion animals, aquatic life, or native species.*

can cause choking or intestinal obstruction. Meat-soaked strings from rump roasts can also be hazards. To be safe, put food away immediately and cat-proof your garbage.

- Uncooked meat, fish, and poultry can contain disease-causing bacteria, such as *E. coli*, and parasites such as *Toxoplasma gondii*. These uncooked foods should not be given to your cat. For your own health, as well as your pet's, wash utensils that have been in contact with raw meat, and cook meat thoroughly.
- The holidays can bring extra hazards for cats. For a review of holiday precautions, see "Keeping the Holidays Happy and Safe".

*Unauthorized use of any images, thumbnails, illustrations, descriptions, article content, or registered trademarks of **Foster & Smith, Inc.** is strictly prohibited under copyright law. Site content, including photography, descriptions, pricing, promotions, and availability are subject to change without notice. These restrictions are necessary in order to protect not only our copyrighted intellectual property, but also the health of pets, since articles or images that are altered or edited after download could result in misinformation that may harm companion animals, aquatic life, or native species.*