



SHILOH
VETERINARY HOSPITAL

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP YOUR CAT HAVE A FEAR FREE EXPERIENCE?

A LOT!

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We like to promote the idea of providing a fear-free experience for cats visiting our hospital and also believe that all cats deserve to be free from fear and anxiety every day throughout their lives! Some great ways to achieve this include:

- Providing daily mental enrichment, exercise and play time
- Providing multiple litter boxes in various areas
- Teaching new behaviors with reward-based training
- Avoiding any type of discipline, including a stern voice
- Learning to read your cat's body language so you can understand how he or she is feeling

Preparing and Traveling to Our Hospital

Having a good experience with veterinary visits starts at home! Many cats seem to know when you scheduled an appointment for them and may hide when it's time to go in their carrier. Here are some tips to help prevent your kitty from being stressed:

- Have your clean carrier out in your cat's living space all the time, or at least a week prior to your appointment, with a cozy blanket or cat bed inside. Place your cat's favorite treats in the carrier frequently so he can discover them on his own. We want cat to think the carrier is a comfortable place to rest as well as a magic treat-producing box!
- Spray the inside of the carrier, including the bed, with Feliway Pheromone Spray at least 15 minutes before placing kitty inside. Also spray a towel to place over the carrier and spray the inside of your car.
- Place some very high value treats in the carrier before placing your cat inside.

- Prepare some special treats that you know your cat loves to take to the hospital with you.
- Offer some calm attention and treats to your cat wherever she happens to be, then gently pick her up and place her in the carrier.
- If you have to ‘catch’ your cat, it’s best not to chase, grab, yell, etc. This only increases the cat’s stress and sets him up for a very stressful veterinary visit. Remain calm and slowly reach for the cat. It may help to gently cover your kitty with a towel sprayed with Feliway before picking him up.
- Low calming music in the car can help decrease stress during your trip.

Arrival at Shiloh Veterinary Hospital

- We recommend carrying all cat carriers from the bottom with both hands rather than holding the handle. If holding carriers by the handle, we can accidentally swing the carrier, bump it into doorways, and hold it at an angle so the cat is not level, all of which can add stress and induce fear for cats.
- Place the carrier on one of our tables in the cat waiting area.
- Use one of the Feliway-sprayed towels we provide in the waiting area to cover your carrier while you’re here.
- Speak softly and gently stroke your cat’s face, chin or back of neck only if he seems to enjoy it.
- Do not allow others in the waiting area to put their fingers in your cat’s carrier or let their dog sniff the carrier. Cats can feel very vulnerable and trapped in a carrier so it’s important to protect them from any unnecessary stressors.

In the Exam Room

- Upon entering the room, please turn the door handle to close the door quietly behind you.
- The way in which cats exit their carrier can set the tone for the entire exam. We like to first place carrier on the floor of the exam room and open the door to allow your cat to come out on his own. We can talk about the reason for your visit and give him some time to acclimate to his surroundings.
- If kitty prefers to stay in the carrier, we can remove the top and gently lift him out to be weighed. The doctors can often perform an entire exam with cats lying in the bottom half of their carriers if that is where they are most comfortable.
- We never want to have cats pulled out of the front of the carrier or ‘dumped’ out as these methods are obviously quite unpleasant for the cats.
- Most cats do not enjoy being stroked on their back. To help your cat feel relaxed, offer your hand to her and allow her to rub her face on your hand. This is a way to ‘ask’ your cat if she would like physical attention. If she responds, slowly rub her chin, cheeks or back of neck, frequently pausing to see if she needs a break. Stroking cats down their backs and offering too much physical attention in general can be very over-stimulating to cats and quickly irritate them. They often try to tell us they’ve had enough by twitching the skin on their back, waving their tail back and forth, or even biting. At that point, it’s best to give the cat a break and stop touching her.

- If your cat is not cooperating with the technician or doctor, it is very important that you remain calm and supportive of your cat and resist any temptation to speak sternly, grab, or physically discipline your cat. Cats who are uncooperative are often thought of as 'being bad,' but they are actually scared, and possibly terrified.
- If your cat is fearful while in the hospital, your veterinarian may recommend an anti-anxiety or sedative medication to help her have a better experience. You can help your cat by following the recommendations and striving to make sure that all future visits are Fear Free!

Returning Home

When mammals experience a stressful event, cortisol is released from the brain. Cortisol can remain in the body for one to three days following a stressful situation, potentially causing them to be more reactive to triggers during that time. You may notice that your cat seems to be keeping to himself, acting 'grouchy' or intolerant of interactions with human and animal family members after a veterinary visit.

We recommend providing your cat with a quiet place to rest if you notice any changes in behavior for the next few days. If she prefers to hide somewhere, offer fresh food, water and litter box (opposite side of the room from the food) in the same room so she doesn't have to go far to meet her needs. Please contact us if your kitty still seems to be stressed two to three days after your appointment.

We love to share ideas about how to help our animal friends be happy, relaxed and free of fear! Feel free to ask us for any suggestions we may have for your special feline friend!