C:\Users\user\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\ZT5C5153\MC900441386[1].wmfObesity in Cats

**Why a Healthy Weight is Important for your Cat**

Depending on the size of your cat, as few as two pounds above your cat’s ideal weight can put it at risk for developing some serious medical conditions. Unfortunately, **when a cat is overweight or obese it no longer is a question of “if” your cat will develop a condition secondary to the excess weight but “how many and how soon!”** Some of the common disorders associated with excess weight include:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| * Diabetes | * Respiratory Disease | * Heart Disease |
| * Arthritis | * High blood pressure | * Knee injuries |
| * Back injuries | * Liver Disease | * Vision problems |

Overweight and obese cats are expected to live shorter lives than their fitter, normal weight counterparts. Heavy cats tend to physically interact less with their families and are less energetic and playful. Because they tend to lie around, it is easy to overlook illnesses since we attribute their lethargy to their “normal laziness.”

**How to get your cat to lose weight**

We understand that helping your cat lose weight can be challenging. The two biggest things that you can do are reducing the number of calories (or the amount of food) that you are feeding and increasing your cat’s activity. Even cutting out 1-2 treats per day or playing with a toy for 10 minutes can greatly increase your cat’s success.

* Food Management
  + If you are not already feeding meals, start now!
  + Reduce the amount you feed by 20%
  + Move food bowl around the house and make your cat “search” for the bowl
  + Feed entire meals from food activity toys
  + If your pet still seems hungry after finishing his/her food, you can add 1-2 tablespoons of canned plain pumpkin to the food. This increases the amount of fiber which makes your cat feel fuller without adding many calories
* Exercise Ideas
  + Playing with a feather toy
  + Playing with another cat
  + Chasing laser light

**Special Rewards for Cats**

We still want you to be able to reward your cat while he/she is losing weight. Instead of food, you can substitute a favorite toy or special attention. If you would like to give a food treat, try:

* + 1-2 pieces of kibble
  + 1/8 inch cube of cooked chicken breast

**Reluctant Patients**

What about the cat that wakes you at four in the morning to be fed or the cat that stares at you during dinner or television time until you give in and feed them? Our cats have trained us well and know exactly which buttons to press when it comes to getting their way. Here are some tips for handling the pleading pup:

* Do not use a self-feeder. Auto-feeders are unlimited food machines to a fat cat.
* Pet your cat or play with it when it begs for food. Many cats substitute food for affection so flip the equation and you may find that playtime displaces chowtime.
* Play with your cat when it begs. The distraction and interaction may be just enough to make it forget its desire for food.
* Feed small meals frequently – especially give a last feeding for those cats that like to wake you up in the wee hours begging for more goodies – divide the total volume or calories into four to six smaller meals – whatever you do, don’t feed extra food
* Offer fresh water instead of food. Many cats love fresh water so when they are eyeing the empty food bowl, fill up the water bowl instead. Or, you can also trying turning on a faucet.

**Multi-cat Households**

What do you do if one cat is normal weight and the other is fat? While there are countless creative solutions to this problem, here are a few we’ve found successful”

* Feed separately – this is the ideal solution for multi-cat households. Feed the heavier cat its diet in one room while feeding the other cat its food elsewhere. After a prescribed time, generally fifteen to thirty minutes, pick the food up until the next feeding.
* Do not leave food out while you’re away. In this scenario you can’t be sure who ate what and the smart money is on the fat cat.

**Another person in the house is feeding table scraps**

This is a common problem. While frustrating, there are a few things that you can try

* Put your cat in a separate room during your meal times. If your cat is not in the room next to the table, it is much more difficult for table scraps to get to your cat
* Stop buying cat treats and throw out or donate any treats that you have in the house. If the treats aren’t in the house to begin with, there will be less of a temptation to feed.
* Measure out meals in plastic baggies labeled breakfast and dinner. Then take a few kibbles out of each bag and set those in a special bowl for daily treats. Your cat can then get its pre-measured bag of food at each meal to avoid “cheating” by using heaping cups of food or just dumping food into the bowl.
* Keep the food journal. People are less likely to feed too much if they can see how much their cat is eating each day.