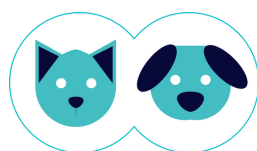


# How To Identify and Relieve Stress in Cats



A guide on how to identify if your cat is stressed, addressing the underlying cause and eliminating the problem.



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## THE PROBLEM

Modern-day life can be very stressful for cats, but they are very good at hiding this. Cats are predators that don't like to show weakness, so they do their best to avoid displaying physical or emotional distress. Often, we only realize our pet is stressed when she develops extreme behaviours or becomes sick, as—just as in humans—stress can be an important contributor or a trigger for some serious diseases. However, if we know what to look for, we can recognize stress before issues arise, and we can therefore prevent problems from occurring.

***There are many signs of stress in cats, both behavioural and physical. Here are some of the most common:***

- Reduced physical activity or increased time spent resting, sleeping, or hiding
- Increased time spent eating
- Increase in grooming, which may result in bald patches
- Increase or decrease in interaction, such as becoming clingy or distant
- Increased marking behaviour, such as face rubbing, scratching, or urine spraying
- Increased aggression and hypervigilance

### ***Consider:***

- Have you noticed a subtle change in your cat's behaviour, or do you feel that she may be a bit "off"?
  - o **If yes, consider making an appointment with your veterinarian, who can give your friend a full exam to rule out any physical issues. If your cat does not have any physical problems, then stress may be the culprit behind any behavioural changes.**



## THE CAUSES

Stress in cats can be caused or exacerbated by many things. Keep in mind that cats are creatures of habit, and they are happiest when a routine is implemented and followed. A change in routine or the pet's environment, such as construction work in the house, the addition of a new baby or a new pet, or visiting strangers, can cause your friend to feel displaced and out of sorts. Cats can also feel stress when they have to compete for resources, such as food, water, and the litter tray, or when there are other cats in the household or neighborhood. Loud noises cause distress for many animals, including cats, and events like holiday fireworks or thunderstorms can trigger anxiety.

### ***Consider:***

- Did your cat's problems begin when his routine was altered? Have there been any major changes in your household recently?
  - o **If yes, then your cat is likely experiencing stress due to the changes in his environment. A physical exam by your veterinarian is always a good idea, as this can rule out any contributing physical issues. If the stressful situation cannot be avoided (a new baby introduced into the family, for example), your vet can discuss calming therapies and perhaps medication to help him adjust to the change.**

## THE SOLUTION

While not every stressful situation can be avoided, there are many things you can do to alleviate some of the stress your cat may be feeling. Doing so may help prevent further behavioural changes or potential illness.



### **Consider:**

- Maintain a consistent routine.
- Think before introducing new cats (or other pets) to the household.
- Have one more food bowl, water bowl, and litter tray than the number of cats in the house, and place each of them away from each other in suitably private locations.
- If your cat is allowed outdoors, let her decide when to go outside and come back in.
- Ensure your cat has plenty of 3D space to explore, a few different types of scratching posts, and a variety of toys that are presented on a rotating basis.
- Create a safe hideaway that he can access at all times.
- Make sure strange cats can't come into your house.
- Consider the use of pheromone diffusers, dietary supplements, and drugs (talk to your veterinarian before using either supplements or drugs).

### **BONUS TIPS**

Taking your cat to the vet or cattery can cause a great deal of anxiety for you and your cat. From getting your cat in their carrier, to traveling in the care, to sitting in the waiting room.

***Every step can be stressful. Try these tips to make the experience more manageable and relaxed:***

- Feed your cat in their carrier so they are used to going in there every day and associate it with a reward
- Use a pheromone spray in your cat's carrier when they travel
- Get your cat used to traveling with lots of short trips while getting tasty treats
- Choose a carrier that has solid walls or cover it with a towel in the waiting room
- Be on time (not too early or late) and sit as far away as possible from any dogs to reduce stress while waiting