

How to Kitten Proof Your House

They say, “Curiosity killed the cat,” for young kittens, this saying is sometimes only too true. Young animals are very curious, and this curiosity can lead to serious injury. Here are some tips to prepare for your new pet.

Think of your pet as a perpetual toddler: Get down on your hands and knees and look at things from their perspective. From this point you may see some nooks and crannies that your pet will soon find. Block off any holes and vents that small animals could crawl into. Remember that cats and kittens can get into any space they can fit their head through. Keep household cleaners and any other chemicals locked up. Young animals soon learn how to open cupboards.

Teething and Chewing: At about 4 months of age, kittens start losing their baby teeth and they start teething. At this time, they will chew on everything! Electrical cords can cause serious shock when chewed so keep them out of reach or use pet repellent spray (like Bitter Apple). Anything that will fit in your pet’s mouth can be dangerous. Anything that can be chewed up and swallowed can cause a blockage of the stomach or intestines and may need surgery to be removed. Keep small toys and other things off the floor and have plenty of appropriate “chew toys” for your puppy available.

Chocolate: Chocolate can cause serious problems. It contains a strong stimulant called theobromine that is toxic to pets. Bakers chocolate is more dangerous than other types. It will also cause serious upset to the GI system and cause diarrhea. Call your veterinarian with any questions if your pet ingests chocolate.

Bones and Table-scrap are a No-No: Most bones will splinter when chewed and can cause injury to the esophagus and GI tract. Table scraps are high in fat and can lead to pancreatitis or obesity. Your pets should be fed high-quality pet food and a limited number of appropriate treats.

Pesticides: If a product is used to kill something, it is probably not good for your pet! Keep all herbicides, pesticides, and insecticides locked up. Be especially aware of rat poisons and ant poisons. Use them only in areas where your pet can’t easily get into.

Not all Flea Treatments are Created Equal: Cats are not small dogs, so do not use a flea treatment marketed for dogs on cats. An adult product may be harmful to puppies and kittens. Make sure the product is safe for younger animals. We recommend Frontline or Revolution. Not collars or other topical treatments.

Antifreeze: Antifreeze is very sweet tasting and is attractive to pets. Ingestions of antifreeze causes kidney failure if not treated immediately. Keep it locked up and clean up any spills immediately.

Kittens Grow Rapidly: What fit yesterday may not fit today. Improperly fitting collars and harnesses can cut into skin and cause severe wounds. Check collars and harnesses daily to make sure you can fit at least 1-2 fingers under it.

Over-The-Counter Drugs: Acetaminophen (Tylenol), Ibuprofen (Advil), and Naproxen (Aleve) can be lethal for your pet. Even aspirin can be lethal in high doses. Keep all medicines stored out of reach (realizing that kittens will soon be able to jump to new heights). Never give your pet any sort of drug without consulting your veterinarian first.

Kittens Love to Play With Ribbons and Strings: However, if these are swallowed, they can get caught on the base of the tongue or in the stomach and cause serious problems with the intestines. Strings and ribbons often have to be surgically removed if they are swallowed. Also watch out for the cords on curtains and blinds. Many cats and kittens think they are toys and can easily get hung up in them.

Poisonous Plants: Here is a limited list of plants that can cause serious problems in your pets:

- Morning Glory
- Philodendron, Elephant Ear, Dieffenbachia, Jack-in-the-Pulpit—Can cause pain and irritation upon chewing
- Sago plants
- Milkweed, Lily-of-the-Valley, Oleander, Laurel, Azalea, Foxglove, Rhododendron—Can cause heart rhythm abnormalities.
- Buttercup—GI problems (vomiting/diarrhea)
- Dumbcane
- Plant bulbs—Daffodil, Hyacinths, Tulips
- Onion, Garlic and Chives—can cause anemia, especially in cats.
- Lilies—Day Lily, Easter Lily, Tiger Lily—causes kidney failure in cats.
- Christmas Plants—Poinsettia—oral and GI irritation. Mistletoe—GI and Heart (pulse) problems, and Holly—like chocolate, contains theobromine.

This is not a complete list. If your pet ingests any part of a plant, you are not sure about, call poison control or your veterinarian. Many plants have the same common name—keep a record of the scientific name of the plants (which can usually be found on the package or label). This will help poison control, or your veterinarian determine if the plant is in fact poisonous.

Other things to Remember:

- Young animals, like children, can crawl into plastic bags and suffocate.
- Tobacco (Nicotine) is toxic to pets. Keep ashtrays and cigarette butts cleaned up and out of reach.
- Keep covers on pools and hot tubs. Young animals many are not able to swim well.
- Watch out for hot irons, space heaters, coffee pots, etc. Young animals can easily get burned if they knock them down or jump onto counters when they're on.
- Always use a fireplace screen.
- Keep off chemically treated lawn. Follow directions as to when it's ok to allow them back onto the grass.