

It seems like it was only yesterday when you brought your bundle of fluffy kitten home. The rigours of housetraining and establishing your kitten's routine, is punctuated with the playful antics of her youthful enthusiasm.

Then one day, it seems that someone has pressed the fast-forward button—your kittycat is now an adult approaching her senior years. The progression into adulthood to senior doesn't have to be a scary one, as long as adjustments to their lifestyle and care are made.

The good news is that cats are living much longer and healthier lives thanks to the advances in veterinary science and better diets. Cats were once considered a senior at 8-years-old a number of years ago. Now veterinarians are more likely to classify a cat as senior into their early teens – 10- or 12-years-old. It's not uncommon for many cats to live into their 20s.

Research tells us that indoor cats have a much longer lifespan than their outdoor counterparts. Indoor cats are less likely to find themselves in trouble from traffic, marauding dogs or territorial cat-terrorists. They have less exposure to disease and parasites.

It's very important to maintain regular health check-ups with your vet. A vet that has seen your cat through her various life-stages, will have a 'base-line' of your cat's health and be more likely to detect changes in health that you would otherwise miss.

A veterinarian may suggest a dietary change especially as older cats reduce their level of activity. A less active cat is more prone to putting on weight and that increases the risk of serious health issues like diabetes. Always consult your vet on how to adjust her diet as an abrupt change can cause serious medical conditions like liver damage.

It's especially important to note any changes in their eating and drinking habits. Some older cats can become more active and seemingly hungry all the time. If your cat develops a huge appetite but doesn't seem to be putting on weight, this could be a red flag to indicate something more sinister like hyperthyroidism. A vet can check this relatively quickly and there are a number of treatments available to you.

An increase in water consumption can point to diabetes or kidney disease. Again, these changes should be discussed with your veterinarian.

As cats age, they may require extra brushing as the rigours of self-grooming can take their toll. Regular grooming sessions also mean that you can detect new lumps or bumps. Grooming sessions also give you both quality, bonding time and keeps her shiny and clean.

Keep an eye and ear out for changes in behaviour. Look out for behaviour changes like excessive vocalisations, night prowling or losing their orientation. Although these changes in behaviour are not considered serious, discussing this with your vet can bring peace of mind.

It's important to provide your senior cat with a comfortable environment. As cats age, they are less tolerant of temperature changes so it's important to provide cool places to lounge when the mercury rises

and warm beds for winter months. If the rigours of climbing become an issue, you may want to look at some of the ramps and pet step products so that she can still lay on her favourite chair or bed.

Maintain healthy joint and muscle health with food supplements and talk to your veterinarian about pain management. There's a range of high quality supplements on the market, specifically for cats these days, whereas years ago these were near impossible to find.

Cat lovers the world over, know the joy that our feline friends bring into our lives. The transition into your cat's senior years needn't be a stressful or sad time. Senior cats have plenty of time and pep to remind you just how special your relationship is with them and how much affection they can bestow on you.



Care for Older Cats

By Lisa Treen



Finally, a joint product just for cats!

Joint Guard Powder for Cats



Arthritis in cats often goes undiagnosed

Studies looking retrospectively at radiographs of cats revealed lesions consistent with appendicular limb Osteoarthritis in 17 – 64% of cases¹.

Joint Guard for Cats contains all the natural ingredients that have been proven to repair and protect the joints

Each 625 mg scoop of Joint Guard for Cats contains:

- Glucosamine hydrochloride – 125 mg
- Chondroitin sulfate – 100 mg
- MSM – 13 mg
- Manganese gluconate – 11 mg
- Calcium Ascorbate (Vitamin C) – 20 mg
- Plus other co-factors important for maintaining healthy joints

Early diagnosis of feline arthritis is important in helping minimise the pain and further damage to the affected joint(s).

Symptoms of arthritis in cats include:

- Overt lameness
- Reduction in the ability to jump
- Poor grooming habits
- Abnormal elimination habits
- Anorexia
- Depression
- Weight loss
- Aggressive behaviour



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Reference: 1. Lascelles B.D.X. et al, J Vet Intern Med 2007;21:410-416.

APVMA No. 62059

