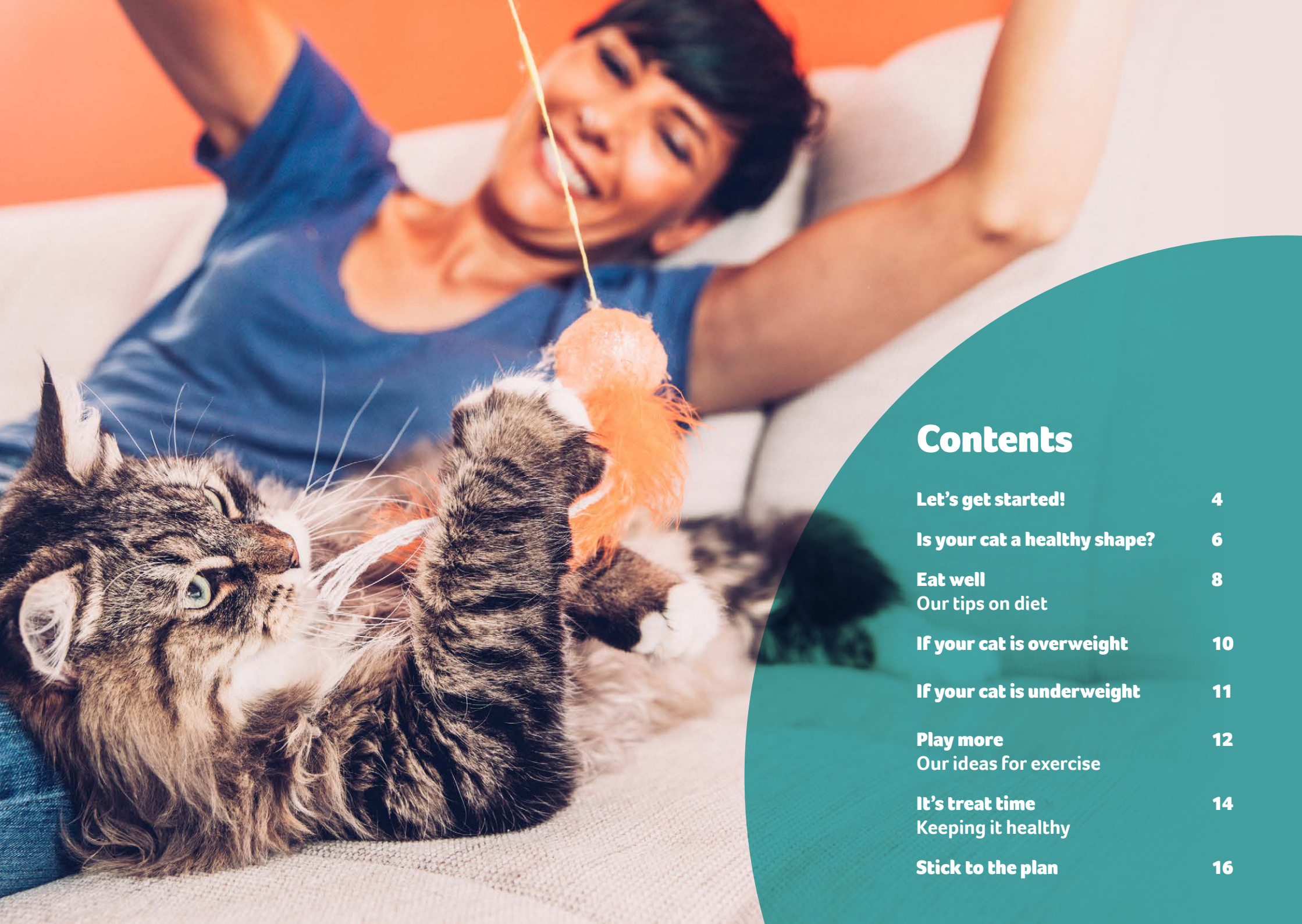




**Eat well.**  
**Play more.**  
**Live longer.**

Give your cat all the ingredients  
of a healthy, happy life

**#WeighUp**



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# Let's get started!

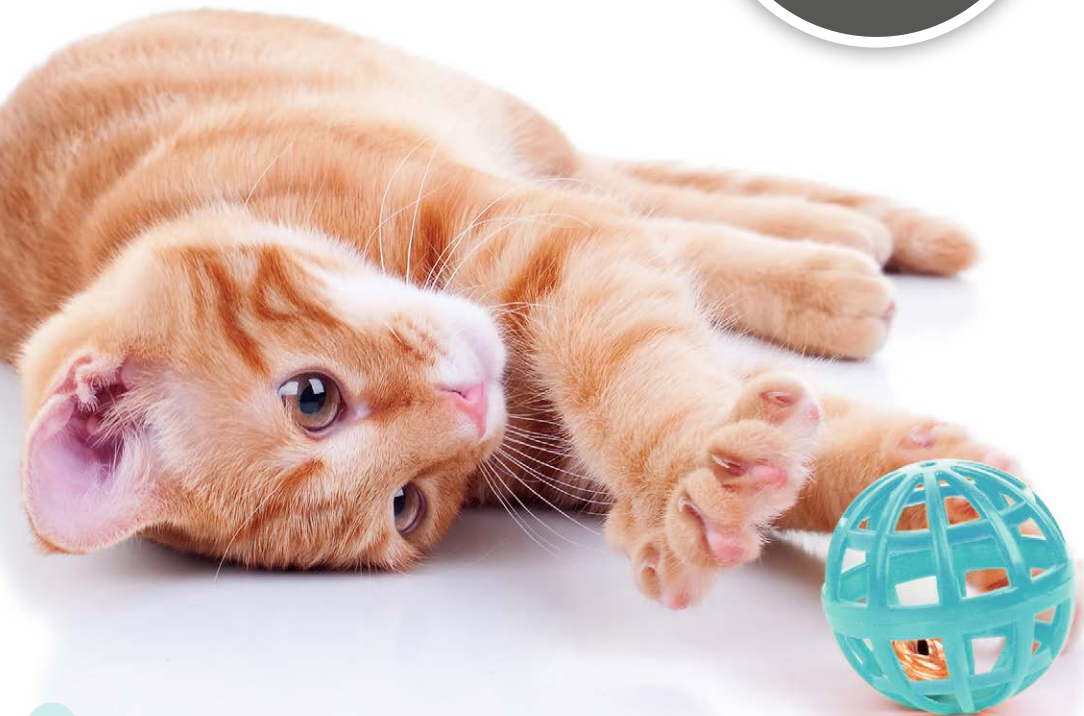
**Just like people, pets need to eat the right diet and get plenty of exercise to live long, healthy and happy lives. But as many of us know, doing those things isn't always easy!**

Every year, we produce our PDSA Animal Wellbeing (PAW) Report about how healthy and happy the UK's pets really are. Our latest Report shows that too many people are still feeding their cat food that isn't good for them.

5% of cat owners told us they've fed more treats since the start of lockdown and that their pet has gained weight during this period.

Not surprisingly, many vets tell us they now see many more overweight and obese cats – even though most owners know that obese cats have more health problems, and live shorter lives.

Visit our  
Pet Health Hub  
for expert advice  
on how to care  
for your pet  
[here](#)

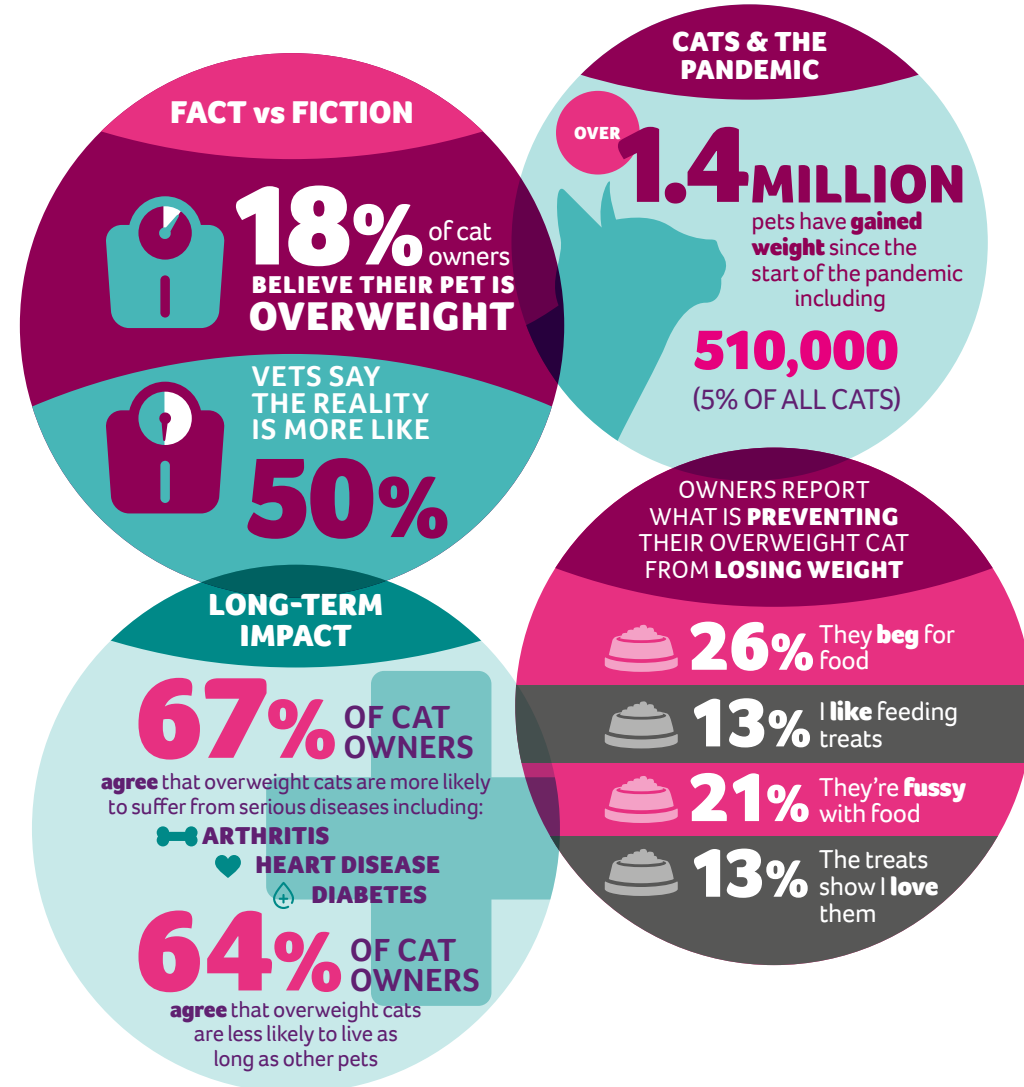


## We can make a difference

By working together we can help to solve the obesity crisis facing the UK's pets.

We've put together this handy guide to help you keep your cat fit, active and the perfect body shape.

And if your cat is not a healthy weight, we've got some tips on how you can help them get back into shape.



# Is your cat a healthy shape?

## It's easy to check

When it comes to judging if your cat is carrying extra weight, their shape is a better indicator than relying on the scales. That's because the ideal weight is different for every type and breed – but a healthy shape is the same for all cats.

It's good to get into the habit of checking your cat's shape every few weeks, starting when they're a kitten. That way, you'll know what's normal for your cat – and they'll enjoy the extra attention!

## 'Look & Feel'

Running your hands (and your eyes) over your cat is the best way to check their shape. We've included some pictures to help you decide what Body Condition Score your cat is.

## Living longer: Your cat's shape is important

- A cat with a healthy shape is more likely to enjoy a long and happy life.
- Overweight cats get old before their time, and you'll have less fun with them.
- Being overweight can trigger health problems such as diabetes or worsen the symptoms of other underlying health conditions, such as arthritis causing your cat pain, discomfort and potentially shortening their life.
- Operations are more risky for cats that are overweight.



### Feel

Run your hands along your cat's back. You should be able to feel the spine and hipbones quite easily under the skin, but they shouldn't be sticking out.

### Feel

Run your hands over your cat's side. The skin should move freely over the ribs, which ought to be easy to feel.

### Look

Look at your cat from the side, and from above. You should be able to see a waist; if not, your cat may be a bit overweight.

### Feel

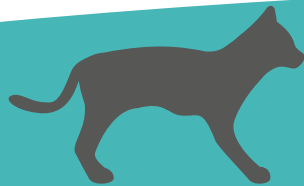
Gently feel the base of your cat's tail where it joins the spine. There shouldn't be any build-up of fat.

### Feel

Feel under your cat's tummy. It should go in, not bulge out.

## BODY CONDITION SCORE

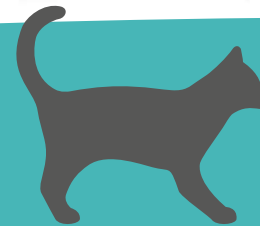
Watch a PDSA Vet show you how to check your cat's shape [here](#)



### UNDERWEIGHT (Body Condition Score 1-3)

Underweight cats range from 1-3 on the 9-point body condition scale (1 = thinnest, 3 = just under ideal). If your cat is underweight you will notice:

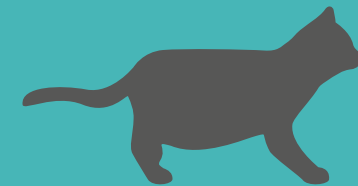
- A very tucked in waist.
- They are visibly bony i.e. you can easily see their hips, ribs, and backbone.
- None, or very little body fat.



### IDEAL WEIGHT (Body Condition Score 4-5)

Cats are an ideal weight when scored as 4-5 on the 9-point body condition scale. If your cat is an ideal weight you will notice:

- An obvious waist when looking from the side and above (they should have an 'hourglass' shape).
- The ribs and backbone can be felt with a light touch using the flat of your fingers, but you can't see them.



### OVERWEIGHT (Body Condition Score 6-9)

Overweight cats range from 6-9 on the 9-point body condition scale (6 = just over ideal, 9 = obese). If your cat is overweight you will notice:

- No visible waist from the side or above.
- The ribs can only be felt if you apply pressure (if they are very overweight you may not be able to feel the ribs at all).
- There may be fat pockets around the neck, shoulders, hips and the base of the tail.



# Eat well...

## Your cat needs the right food to stay healthy and happy.

The type and amount of food your cat needs will depend on their breed, species, age, health and lifestyle. But all cats need fresh water to drink, at all times.

## What should I feed my cat?

Cats can't be vegetarians. This is because their bodies need certain proteins that are only found in meat. Without them, your cat could become very ill, develop a severe heart condition and even go blind.

Cats also need to eat animal fat to get vitamin A, which helps keep them healthy.

'Lifestage feeding' matches your cat's diet to what they need at different ages and stages of development. For example, kittens need different food from older cats, because their bodies are still growing.

Neutering often coincides with the time in your pet's life when their behaviour is calming down following their kitten years and they have passed their rapid growth stage; as such they won't need

such a high energy food. It's important to feed your cat the right food for their life stage, as the food will have been designed to have the correct nutritional requirements for the next stage in your pet's life.

Many companies make food especially for kittens, juniors, adults and seniors.

Feeding your cat a complete commercial pet food is the easiest way to make sure they get all the nutrients they need.

- You'll find guidelines on how much to feed on the packet.
- You can check you're feeding the right amount by weighing out the food using electronic scales.



## How often should I feed my cat?

Cats prefer lots of small meals to one large one and are very good at knowing how much they need to eat but some can get a bit carried away. They 'graze', eating between eight and 16 times a day! So, it's best just to leave food out for them, unless there's a chance it will go off, or be eaten by another cat.

It's a good idea to weigh out your cat's food at the start of the day. If you do this, and you're not feeding extra treats and your cat is exercising and still putting on weight, make sure they're not getting extra food from elsewhere.

You can use a 'Please don't feed me' quick-release collar to notify neighbours, if you think they're eating elsewhere and if that's not the case, ask your vet to check your cat over.



## Cats don't need treats to know you love them

It sounds obvious, but pets that eat too much get fat! If your cat eats a lot of treats, as well as their normal food, those extra calories will turn into fat. The best way to show your love to your cat is playing and spending time with them as this is what they enjoy most of all. See our Treats section for healthy alternatives [here](#).



## HOW ABOUT A SAUCER OF MILK?

Our vets recommend that you don't give cats milk to drink. Cows' milk contains lactose, a type of sugar that cats find hard to digest, which can cause tummy upsets.



## Food scraps

Our vets advise you not to feed leftovers, bits of meat and other scraps, because:

- Cats that are used to getting scraps may refuse to eat their normal food without them.
- It unbalances your cat's regular diet, and they often get overweight.
- Your cat may misbehave during your mealtimes, thinking they're going to get food too!

Feeding your **cat**...



**3 SMALL CUBES OF CHEESE**



...is like **you** eating

**2 QUARTER POUNDERS**

# If your cat is overweight...

## Carrying extra pounds can cause a whole host of health problems

Excessive weight puts a lot of strain on your cat's body which can aggravate other health conditions like arthritis or breathing problems, resulting in more extreme symptoms and even reduced life expectancy. Obesity can also trigger serious diseases like diabetes or blocked bladder.

Generally, cats put on weight by eating more food than they need. The good news is that in most cases there's lots of ways to make weight loss easier for both you and your cat; with a little bit of knowledge and our help, you'll be able to put a plan in place to help get them into the perfect shape.



# If your cat is underweight...

You may have noticed a change in your cat's body shape or an unexplained drop in their weight. It's best to seek advice from your vet and get a pet health check. If there are no underlying health concerns that could have caused the weight loss, your vet can give you exercise and diet advice to help your pet reach a healthy weight.

## How to maintain your cat at their ideal weight



**Treats** – Just like humans, the occasional treat is fine. But make sure the number of food treats doesn't start to creep up!



**Play** – Introduce playtime to keep your cat active. It will help improve their physical and mental health, while strengthening your bond with them.



**Diet** – If your cat's at an ideal weight, stick to the same food and increase/decrease the amounts to suit their weight as necessary.



**Routine** – Feed your cat at the same time each day, so they get into a good feeding routine.

Through science and research, Royal Canin has developed food that specifically supports the nutritional management of cats, including those with specific health problems.

Visit the online [PDSA Pet Store](#) where you can buy Royal Canin food.



# Play more...

## Give your cat the exercise they love and need

Cats are designed to be active in short bursts, so playing with them is the best way to make sure they get enough exercise. This is especially true if, like an increasing number of cats, they live exclusively indoors.

Playing is also a great way to bond with your cat and show them how much you love them!

Special cat toys and activities will help to keep your cat busy and interested in life. This is important because cats that are bored tend to eat too much and get fat. Remember to keep your cat's toys clean and throw them away if they get damaged. Getting them a new toy every now and again is a perfect treat, and much better for them than extra food.

Cats naturally play for about five minutes at a time before resting. If they stop they probably just need a break, give them some space and play again later.

## Most cats love playing, especially with:



### Things they can hit

Cats enjoy batting at light things that move easily across the floor: a ball of paper is ideal. It's important not to give them anything they can chew up or swallow.



### Things they can chase

Wind-up toys, or a piece of string with a bow attached to the end dragged across the floor, will turn even a couch potato into a hunter!



### Things they can climb into

Cats can have hours of fun with an empty box.



### Things they can scratch

Scratching keeps a cat's claws sharp and tones their shoulder and back muscles. A sturdy scratching-post, that's the right size for your cat, will meet this need – and save your furniture!

Although it's tempting, it's not a good idea to use your hand or fingers as 'bait'. Your cat will think it's OK to scratch and bite you – and it's not, even as a game!

You can also try feeding your cat in different parts of the home, or even hiding their food around the house, so they have to use the stairs and work to get their food!

Please don't use laser pointers to play, as although your cat may appear to enjoy chasing the laser beam, they can actually cause your cat stress and frustration.

It's important not to make big or sudden changes to your cat's diet or exercise routine. If you have any questions or concerns, your vet will be happy to help.

Check out the online [PDSA Pet Store](#) for range of safe toys to keep your cat happy.



# It's treat time

## Let's keep it healthy!

Cats will often compliment whatever you're feeding them with creatures they catch hunting while out and about. Fortunately, the burst of high intensity movement needed for hunting will generally use up enough energy so this additional snack won't have a huge impact on your cat's waistline.

However, cats who lead a calmer lifestyle, such as house cats, or those who are already overweight and less active, often have less opportunity for these high-energy hunting activities.

These cats can become focused on treats and tidbits as it makes life more interesting for them. As a result of this, your cat may need a bit of 're-training' so they fall back in love with activity and play to take their mind off food.

As their owner, it's important to remember that if you want your cat to enjoy the odd treat they need to have adequate exercise throughout the day, to justify the reward. Make sure that any treats given don't take up more than 10% of their daily food allowance, and ensure you reduce their usual food so you don't overfeed.

Remember cats are much smaller than us, so a 'small' treat can have a huge impact.



## The best treat is always play

Playtime with their best friend (you) is the best treat you can give your cat. Any additional food given over and above their daily allowance will mean they put on weight.

## Some suitable treats include:



**Small piece of (skinless) chicken breast** – Steam cook some fresh chicken breast, chop into small pieces and keep it in the fridge until you need it. This will be a high reward treat as it will smell wonderful for your cat, but it's high in protein and low fat.



**Half a teaspoon of tuna** – Canned tuna is fine, but make sure it's stored in spring water, not oil or brine.



**Small piece of lean ham** – Boiled ham is best, that way most of the salt will have been removed through the boiling process.



**A piece of dry food from their daily food allowance** – You can take out a portion of your cat's daily allowance and set this aside for treats.



**Half a teaspoon of white fish** – Steamed white fish is great, very smelly, which cats will adore, low fat and high protein!





# Stick with the plan

Helping your cat to lose weight may take a bit of time and effort, but it's worth it. Keep at it and your cat can look forward to a longer, healthier and happier life.

## To do list

- ✓ Write up daily food diary
- ✓ Boil ham for treats
- ✓ Steam chicken breast, chop, freeze – for treats
- ✓ Buy digital scales
- ✓ Buy puzzle feeder
- ✓ Get new cat toy
- ✓ Put up cat activity shelves

## Food diary



**Morning:** 1/2 pouch cat food and morning portion of dry biscuits



**Mid morning:** a small piece of ham



**Time for lunch:** a few dry biscuits as a little treat



**Dinner time:** 1/2 pouch cat food and some dry biscuits



## Tuna treats for cats:

### Ingredients

#### You will need:

- 1 tin of tuna in water (undrained)
- 1 egg (beaten)
- 250g plain flour (can be gluten-free)
- Extra water
- Biscuit cutters (they'll need to be fairly small for your cat)



### Method

Preheat your oven to gas mark 4 or 180°C (160°C for a fan oven) and line a baking tray with baking paper.

Blend the tuna until it's smooth (you can use a hand blender for this if you don't have a food processor).

In a large mixing bowl, combine the tuna and egg.

Add in the flour and mix thoroughly to form a dough. If the mixture is too dry, add a little water. We recommend sifting the flour, but this isn't essential.

Once you've made your dough, roll it out on a lightly floured surface until it's about 1/4 inch thick.

Cut out your biscuits and put them on the lined baking tray.

Bake in the oven for 20 minutes, or until the biscuits are crunchy.

Let the biscuits cool, then store them in an airtight container (for up to two weeks).

Remember – these are treats and should only be given to your cat in moderation. As this recipe makes quite a lot of biscuits, you might want to give some to friends and family who have cats. Always remember to reduce your cat's daily food allowance if they have treats.



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for more tips and advice  
on looking after  
your pet**

## #WeighUp

Visit our **Pet Health Hub**  
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how to care for your pet

[www.pdsa.org.uk/weighup-phh](http://www.pdsa.org.uk/weighup-phh)

**pdsa**  
SAVING PETS CHANGING LIVES