

# Caring for Our Older Cats to Live a Longer, Healthier Life



There comes a time when our cats have reached a certain age whereby s/he begins to move slower and be less active than before. It is at this point, we will find our once energetic, playful cat for so many years becomes a calm, thoughtful and understanding friend that sits by your side or curled around your lap or feet. Hence, it is our responsibility as cat owners to understand this particular life stage and provide special attention & comfort to our cats to live a longer, healthier life in his or her golden years.

## Recognising signs of aging pets:

<b>Age</b>	Cats are considered matured from 7 to 10 years old; senior from 11 to 14 years old and geriatric from 15 years and older. Note that a 21 years old cat is equivalent to a 100 years old person.
<b>Activity</b>	Usually s/he is less active and possibly holding back due to stiffness, and aches in his or her bones and joints (generally at the shoulders, leg and hip), especially after s/he wakes up from nap or climbing the stairs. Your older cat may have change of play preferences, eating or drinking habits.
<b>Weight &amp; Appetite</b>	Do watch out for the following signs: 1) put on weight over the years due to lack of exercise or overeating, or 2) has a drastic loss of weight, which could possibly indicate signs of gastrointestinal changes, chronic heart disease, liver or kidney failure.
<b>Vision and Hearing</b>	Check out for signs of cataract at early stage whereby the cat's eyes will have hazy whitish cloudiness in the pupil area, meaning that his/her vision is affected, which could possibly lead to blindness if not checked by the veterinarian or left untreated. As for your cat's hearing, you will know it is a problem when s/he does not respond to his/her name or verbal commands as they would normally do in the past.
<b>Skin and Coat</b>	Your older cat could experience excessive hair loss or dull, thinning, matted, graying coat.
<b>Oral Health</b>	Your cat has bad breath or drool excessively – might have developed tooth and gum conditions. Because of a sore gum or loose teeth, s/he may let food drop out of his or her mouth or even refuse to eat.
<b>Urinary Health</b>	Look out for signs whereby your older cat experienced frequent urination, urinary incontinence, straining or inability to pass urine – this problem is often caused by a treatable medical condition called Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD), which is a group of symptoms affecting the cat's lower urinary system & bladder.

## Tips to Extend A Longer, Healthier Life for Your Older Cats

### Give the Right Nutritional Needs and Clean, Fresh Water:

Older cats need fewer calories and low-salt diet since their activity levels have been reduced compared to the past, when they were active, healthy adult cats. Remember to select premium cat food formulas that are specially designed to help keep older cats as long as possible with:

- Highly digestible ingredients consisting of superior nutrients such as high level of **Vitamin E**, in combination with additional natural antioxidants – **Vitamin C, Beta-Carotene** and **Selenium** – that helps your cat's immune system to be strong and **Taurine** to help maintain normal heart function and retinal structure;
- Increased levels of fibre for better assimilation and lower stool volume;
- Softer kibbles to make it easy for older cats to chew

### Grooming for Dental, Skin & Coat

Take care of your cat's teeth with routine cleaning and dental care either by providing cat food with unique fibre kibble that helps scrub teeth and is clinically proven to reduce plaque build-up, or make an appointment for scaling with your veterinarian. If dental problem is left untreated, then this can result in bacteria spreading to other areas in the cat's body. For skin & coat, you could check for lumps on skin for signs of cancer, cyst or tumour while bathing your cat with suitable mild, pH

level cat shampoo. Besides, providing your cat frequent brushing helps to prevent hairball and having a bad hair day!

### Exercise

Keep your cats active, physically and mentally alert, at least once in a day with gentle simulation toys as this will enhance circulation, maintain your cat's muscle tone & ideal weight, and also reinforces the bond between the two of you.

### Environment

Always provide your older cats with a comfortable place to sleep with his/her food/ water bowl and litter tray placed in an easily accessed area, which does not require any climbing or jumping. It should also be free of obstacles and clutter to avoid unnecessary stress for your older cat. Ensure that your older cats with loss of vision or hearing do not roam outdoors without your supervision unless they are in a harness or in an enclosure.

### Regular Visits to the Veterinarian

Visits to your veterinarian for regular total health check-up is a must and it should be done bi-annually. If you have any questions or concerns with regards to your older cat's health, you should contact your veterinarian.

Hence by having a better understanding of your cats needs during their golden years lifestage, you can give the best care to him/her, which leads him/her to have a longer happier and healthier life.



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