Westover Hills
ANIMAL HOSPITAL

FIRST OWNERS VISIT
TAKE ME HOME



YOUR OWNER'S GUIDE

The Cat Pet Care Guide

Everything worth keeping in one place. The straight answers for the in-between, from the puppy and kitten chaos all the way through the gray-muzzle years.

Westover Hills Animal Hospital (210) 680-5243 Monday to Friday, 7:30 am to 5:30 pm

WELCOME

Pets make life better. Their care should be the easy part.



We put this guide together to keep the useful stuff in one easy place. The kind of things that come up between visits when you just want a straight answer. New puppy chewing everything in sight? Cat boycotting the litter box? Wondering if that lump after a vaccine is normal? It is in here.

Think of it as the in-between. For everything else, that is what we are here for.

What we're here for

We are a full-service animal hospital, which is a fancy way of saying we look after just about everything under one roof. Routine checkups and vaccines, parasite prevention, dental work, lab tests and diagnostics, surgery, and the not-so-fun days when your pet is sick or hurt and needs us quickly.

Mostly, though, we are here to know your pet. The more we see them over the years, the better we get at spotting what is normal for them and catching what is not, early, when it is easier to handle. That is the whole idea behind good preventive care, and the thread running through this guide.

A quick look

01	**Preventive care and wellness**	Vaccine records, parasite prevention, and the routine care that keeps small problems from becoming big ones.
02	**New pet resources**	How to bring a new pet into the household without the drama, and settle everyone into a routine.
03	**Nutrition and feeding**	How to switch foods without upsetting any stomachs, and keep your pet eating well.
04	**Dental and home care**	The at-home basics. Teeth, ears, and the other things easier to stay ahead of than to fix.

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01 Wellness and preventive care

Feline Wellness and Prevention Record. Vaccination tracking, FIV/FeLV testing, parasite prevention, lifestyle assessment.

After Your Pet's Vaccines. Expected reactions, warning signs, when to call us.

02 New pet resources

Introducing a New Pet to Your Household. Dog-to-dog, cat-to-cat, dog-and-cat introductions, reading stress signals.

Litter Box Training Your New Cat. Setup, cleaning and maintenance, troubleshooting.

03 Nutrition and feeding

Switching Your Pet's Food. The 7-day plan, sensitive-stomach guidelines, common questions.

04 Dental and home care

Dental Care. The basics, the brushing training plan, professional cleanings.

Ear Care. Spotting trouble, cleaning and medicating at home, sticking with treatment.

FOR THE LONG HAUL

From the puppy and kitten chaos to the gray-muzzle years.

Anything in here you want to talk through, or anything that has you worried, give us a call. That is what we are here for.

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YOUR CAT'S WELLNESS AND PREVENTION RECORD

One page for every shot, every reminder

Bring this along to every visit and we will keep it current together. It is the simplest way to know exactly where your cat stands.

01 The basics

NAME

BREED

DATE OF BIRTH / AGE

OWNER

SEX

☐ Male ☐ Female

SPAYED / NEUTERED

☐ Yes ☐ No

MICROCHIP NUMBER

02 Vaccines

The core protection every cat should have, plus FeLV depending on lifestyle.

VACCINE	DATE GIVEN	NEXT DUE
FVRCP #1		
FVRCP #2		
FVRCP #3		
FVRCP booster		
FeLV #1		
FeLV #2		
FeLV booster		
Rabies		

03 FIV / FeLV testing

A simple blood test, usually done at the first visit or before starting FeLV vaccines.

DATE	RESULTS
	☐ Negative ☐ Positive
	☐ Negative ☐ Positive
	☐ Negative ☐ Positive

04 Kitten schedule

Got a kitten? Here is the rough roadmap for the first few months. We will keep you on track.

6 TO 8 WEEKS	☐ FVRCP			
10 TO 12 WEEKS	☐ FVRCP	☐ FeLV #1		
14 TO 16 WEEKS	☐ FVRCP	☐ FeLV #2	☐ Rabies	
1 YEAR BOOSTER	☐ FVRCP	☐ Rabies	☐ FeLV (if indicated)	

05 Lifestyle

Where your cat spends their time shapes what they are exposed to. (Yes, the screen-door escape artist counts as indoor/outdoor.)

☐ Strictly indoor ☐ Indoor / outdoor ☐ Outdoor

Recommended preventive care

What we would suggest based on the lifestyle above.

☐ Monthly heartworm prevention
☐ Monthly flea prevention
☐ Monthly tick prevention
☐ FeLV vaccination

06 Heartworm test ANNUAL

A quick check, since heartworm has no good treatment in cats and prevention is the whole game.

DATE	RESULT
	☐ Negative ☐ Positive
	☐ Negative ☐ Positive
	☐ Negative ☐ Positive

07 Monthly prevention

Even indoor cats are not fully off the hook. Mosquitoes and fleas have a way of finding their way inside.

PRODUCT(S)

☐ Jan ☐ Feb ☐ Mar ☐ Apr ☐ May ☐ Jun ☐ Jul ☐ Aug ☐ Sep ☐ Oct ☐ Nov ☐ Dec

08 Notes

A little steady prevention now adds up to a longer, healthier life later. That is the whole point.

Keep this with your cat's things and bring it to every visit. We will fill it in together and make sure nothing slips.

AFTER THE SHOTS

What to keep an eye on, and when to call us



Good news first. Most pets shrug off their vaccines and go right back to being themselves. If anything does come up, it is almost always mild and clears within a day or two.

01 The normal stuff

None of this is cause for alarm. It usually sorts itself out within 24 to 48 hours.

- A little tired or slower than usual
- Eating a bit less than normal
- A small, temporary bump at the injection site
- A sore spot where the shot went in
- A mild fever

Give them fresh water, a quiet place to rest, and a little grace. They earned it.

02 When to call us right away

These are rare. But if you notice any of them, call us or head to an emergency vet.

- → Swelling in the face, around the eyes, or the muzzle
- → Trouble breathing
- → Severe diarrhea
- → Pale gums
- → Seizures
- → Hives or raised bumps on the skin
- → A lot of vomiting
- → Collapsing or sudden weakness
- → Pain that will not let up, or crying out

Most serious reactions show up within the first few hours, though once in a while they appear over the next day or two. When in doubt, call. We would always rather hear from you.

03 If a mild reaction starts DOGS ONLY

For milder signs like hives or facial swelling, your veterinarian may have you give plain Benadryl (diphenhydramine) while you reach us. Call us first if you can.

READ FIRST **Use plain Benadryl only.** Make sure diphenhydramine is the single active ingredient. Skip anything with added decongestants, pain relievers, or xylitol.

Cats, all sizes

Children's Benadryl liquid (12.5 mg / 5 mL)

0.4 mL per pound

The liquid is easier to dose than tablets for a cat.

A quick example

Using the 0.4 mL per pound rule

A 5 lb cat gets about 2 mL.
A 10 lb cat gets about 4 mL.

For a serious reaction, our doctors recommend both: give Benadryl as directed above, and get your cat evaluated at the nearest emergency veterinary hospital right away. If they are struggling to breathe, collapse, or swell severely, go now.

Always give us a call before dosing. We will confirm the amount for your cat.

04 A heads-up for cat owners

Every so often, a cat develops a lump where the shot went in. Most are nothing. Give us a call if a lump:

- Sticks around longer than 3 months
- Gets bigger than about 2 cm (grape-sized, give or take)
- Keeps growing after the first month

IF YOU NEED US

Westover Hills Animal Hospital

(210) 680-5243
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AFTER HOURS

Thrive Pet Healthcare Specialists
(210) 822-2873

Thanks for trusting us with your pet today. Any worries at all after the visit, we are just a phone call away.

BRINGING HOME A NEW PET

A few ways to help everyone get along

Bringing home a new pet is one of the best days. It is also a big adjustment for the animals already living there, so take the introductions slow. Go at their pace and everyone settles in happily. Rush it and you will be refereeing for weeks.

Patience really is the whole trick.



New here. Be cool.

01 Before they arrive

Give everyone their own setup to start with. Sharing can come later, if it comes at all.

- Separate food and water bowls
- Separate beds
- Separate toys

02 The first few days

Give your new pet a room or quiet corner that is all theirs. A new home is a lot to take in, and having a safe spot to retreat to helps them relax and settle in faster.

03 Making introductions

Take these at the pace of whoever is most nervous. There is no prize for rushing.

Dog → Dog

Usually the quickest to warm up.

- Meet on neutral ground, not at home
- Keep both on leashes
- Keep it short and easy
- Wrap up while it is still going well

Cat → Cat

They like to take it slow, so let them.

- Start them in separate rooms
- Swap bedding and rooms so they learn each other's scent first
- Let them see each other through a cracked door or gate
- Build up to supervised time together, slowly

Dog → Cat

All about the cat feeling safe.

- Keep the dog leashed at first
- Give the cat high places to escape to
- Reward calm behavior from both

04 When to slow down

Noticing any of these? Ease off and give it more time.

- Growling
- Hissing
- Hiding more than usual
- A stiff, frozen body
- Guarding food, toys, or space

None of this means it will not work out. It usually just means you moved a little faster than they were ready for. No harm done. Back up a step and try again.

05 Give it time

Some pets are friends by dinner. Others take weeks or even months. Both are completely normal. Do not force it, and try not to compare yourself to the cuddling videos online. Those took time too. Most pets get there in the end, just on their own schedule.

IF SOMETHING FEELS OFF

Not sure? Give us a call.

We have seen plenty of these work out, and we are always happy to help yours along.

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MASTERING THE LITTER BOX

Cats have opinions

Here is how to stay on their good side. Most cats take to a litter box on their own, so your job is mostly to not get in the way. A few small things decide whether they quietly handle their business or file a complaint on your favorite rug.

FORMAL COMPLAINT

To: Management.
The rug is now a litter box.
This is a protest, not an accident.
Sincerely, the cat.

01 Pick a good box

- Big enough to turn around in comfortably
- Low sides for kittens
- Easy to reach, in a quiet spot

Bigger than you think is usually right. A cramped box gets abandoned.

02 How many boxes?

Cats + 1

One box per cat, plus one extra. Two cats means three boxes.

1 cat = 2 | 2 cats = 3 | 3 cats = 4

Cats do not love waiting. They really do not love sharing.

03 Pick the right litter

Most cats are quietly particular. Safe bets:

- Unscented. That “fresh linen” smell is for you, not them.
- Fine and soft on the paws.
- Above all, clean.

04 Location, location

- Quiet spots, away from the chaos
- Not next to the food and water
- One on each level in a multi-floor home

A little privacy and a clear exit. That is the dream.

05 Keep it clean

THE BIG ONE A dirty box is the #1 reason cats go elsewhere.

Scoop daily

Every day, without fail. The single biggest thing.

Change it out

Swap the litter completely on a regular basis.

Wash gently

Mild soap and water. Nothing heavily scented.

06 When accidents happen

1 Reach for an enzymatic cleaner

It breaks down the odor so your cat is not drawn back to the same spot. Regular cleaners do not.

2 Never punish your cat

They are telling you something is off, and punishment only adds stress to the situation.

3 Look at what changed

A new pet, new furniture, a moved box. Cats notice everything, and react to it.

07 When to call us

Sometimes the problem is medical, not behavioral, and some of these cannot wait. **Give us a call if your cat:**

- → Suddenly stops using the box
- → Urinates more often than usual
- → Seems uncomfortable or in pain
- → Strains to urinate
- → Has blood in the urine

URGENT **A cat straining to urinate, especially a male cat, can be a real emergency.** When in doubt, call. We would always rather take a look.

LITTER TROUBLE THAT WILL NOT QUIT?

It is often a quick fix. Give us a call.

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SWITCHING YOUR PET'S FOOD

Go slow and their stomach will thank you

Whether your vet suggested a new diet or you just found something you like better, the trick is the same. Take it slow. A gradual switch gives your pet's stomach time to adjust and saves you both a messy week.

THE SHORT VERSION

7 days, not 7 minutes

Mix a little more new food in each day until the old food is gone.

01 Why ease into it

Swapping food overnight is a classic way to end up with a rough few days. A slow change lets their digestive system catch up to the new ingredients instead of being ambushed by them.

- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Gas
- A pickier eater
- Tummy grumpiness

02 The 7-day plan

Mix the new food in with the old, shifting the ratio a little more each day.



Keep measuring portions so the total stays right. "A little extra" adds up fast.

03 Sensitive stomachs need extra time

Stretch it to 10 to 14 days if your pet has:

- A history of stomach trouble
- Food sensitivities
- A chronic GI condition
- A recent illness

THE SLOWER RAMP

DAYS	OLD / NEW
Days 1 to 3	90% / 10%
Days 4 to 6	75% / 25%
Days 7 to 9	50% / 50%
Days 10 to 12	25% / 75%
Days 13 to 14	100% new

04 A few things that help

Stick to a schedule. Meals at the same times keep things predictable.

Pause treats for now. Feed only the old and new food. If their stomach acts up, you will know it is the food.

Measure every time. A cup beats eyeballing it and prevents overfeeding.

Keep water topped up. Fresh and clean, always.

05 What's normal

Most pets make the switch without any drama. A little change in their stool the first few days is par for the course. They should keep eating normally, stay their usual energetic self, and have only minor digestive changes, if any.

06 When to call us

Give us a call if your pet has:

- → Repeated vomiting
- → Blood in the stool
- → Low energy
- → Severe diarrhea
- → No interest in eating
- → A lot of gas or discomfort

SECTION 07

A note on prescription diets

If your vet put your pet on a therapeutic diet, stick to it closely. Even small amounts of table food, treats, or other pet food can undercut how well it works. When in doubt, ask us before adding anything.

08 Common questions

My pet only wants the old food.
Slow the transition down and skip the toppings and treats, which encourage picky holdouts.

Can I switch overnight?
Better not to, unless your vet specifically tells you to.

Diarrhea mid-switch?
Back up to the last ratio that sat well, then move more slowly. If it sticks around, call us.

STILL DECIDING

Every pet is a little different. We will help you land on the right one.

Questions about your pet's food or feeding plan? Give us a call. We are glad to help.

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Westover Hills
ANIMAL HOSPITAL

OWNER'S GUIDE
KEEP THIS HANDY

HOME CARE GUIDES

The stuff that comes up at home

Keeping teeth clean and staying ahead of ear trouble. How to handle each one at home, and when to let us take it from there.

01	**Dental care**	Brushing, buildup, and cleanings.
02	**Ear care**	Spotting and cleaning ear trouble.

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01 Dental care

By age three, most dogs and cats have some periodontal disease. It is the most common problem we see, and usually the reason behind bad breath. The good news: it is largely preventable at home.

Plaque soft, wipes away → **Tartar** hardened, stuck on → **Infected gums** loose teeth, pain

Brushing at home

Daily brushing is the single best thing you can do. Build up to it slowly over a few weeks so your pet decides it is no big deal. Starting young (8 to 12 weeks) is ideal, but it is never too late. You will need a soft pet toothbrush, finger brush, or clean washcloth, plus pet toothpaste.

WEEK 1

Get them used to it

Lift the lips, run a finger along teeth and gums. 30 seconds building to a couple of minutes. Treat every time.

WEEK 2

Add a brush, no paste

Damp washcloth or wet brush. Gently rub the outer surfaces back and forth. 30 seconds up to a few minutes.

WEEK 3

Add toothpaste

A pea-sized amount, brushing outer surfaces top and bottom. Aim for a calm, quick daily routine.

A few pointers

- Do not rush it. Pushing too fast creates a pet who hates the whole thing.
- End every session with a treat. Make it the best part of their day.
- Dental chews help, but they are a bonus, not a replacement for brushing.
- If your pet growls, snaps, or really fights it, stop and call us. We will find another way.

NEVER

Never use human toothpaste. It can upset their stomach, and some ingredients are toxic to pets.

Professional cleanings

Even with great home care, most pets need a professional cleaning now and then. We do it under anesthesia to scale off hardened tartar below the gumline and polish, just like your own dental visit. Good home care stretches out the time between them.

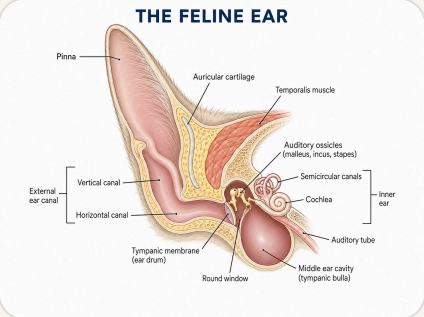
Ask us which toothpaste, chews, and diets are actually worth your money.

02 Ear care

Some cats are simply prone to ear trouble, whether from mites, allergies, or the shape of their ears. Here is how to spot trouble, clean properly at home, and know when it needs us.

Signs of an ear problem

- Shaking the head, or tilting to one side
- Scratching or pawing at the ears
- Discharge, or a smell from the ear
- Redness or swelling
- Flinching when you touch the ear



The feline ear, cross-section. Note the L-shaped canal.

What causes it

Yeast or bacteria, ear mites, allergies, a foreign object like a grass seed, or simply the shape of your pet's ears. Catching it early matters. Left to spread deeper, it gets more painful and harder to treat.

Cleaning and medicating at home

If we sent you home with a cleaner and medication, here is the routine. Do it somewhere easy to wipe down, like a tiled bathroom or outside.

1 Fill it
Fill the canal generously with cleaner. Really fill it, not just a few drops.

2 Massage
Massage the base 30 to 60 seconds. A squishing or squelching sound means the cleaner is reaching down into the canal and doing its job.

3 Wipe
Let them shake, then wipe loosened debris with a cotton ball.

4 Medicate
Apply the prescribed ointment or drops into the canal.

5 Work it in
Massage the base again to work the medication in.

6 Repeat
Repeat as directed, and bring them back for the recheck.

ONE IMPORTANT RULE

Cotton balls, never cotton swabs. Swabs push debris deeper and can damage the eardrum. Stick to the outer parts you can see.

Stick with it

Finish the full course even once ears look better, and keep every recheck. Infections love to return, and the next one is not always the same type.

ANYTHING LOOKS OFF

Teeth and ears are easier to stay ahead of than to fix.

A little at-home care goes a long way, and we will catch the rest at checkups. Notice something between visits? Give us a call.

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