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Feline Weight Loss

An estimated 50-60% of pets are overweight. It is sometimes difficult for us as owners to recognize when our pets are overweight. We see them and pet them every day which makes it hard to recognize small changes. Often people perceive animals at an ideal body weight to be too thin because they are used to seeing overweight pets. We feed our animals well because we love them. We use treats as training tools. We have an overwhelmingly huge selection of pet foods, most of which are high calorie. And, many of us are terribly busy which can make it difficult to exercise our pets regularly.

Thankfully, obesity is preventable and curable! Gooding Veterinary Clinic would love to help. Schedule an appointment to discuss your pet's body condition!

Why is it important to keep my cat at an ideal body weight?

- ♥ Animals live longer when they remain at a healthy body weight.
- ♥ Obesity aggravates and may cause osteoarthritis.
- ♥ Obesity is associated with an increased incidence of diabetes mellitus.
- ♥ Animals store fat around their intestines which may decrease intestinal motility complicating gastrointestinal diseases.
- ♥ Animals store fat within their abdomen and around their heart which may cause difficulty breathing or complicate respiratory diseases.
- ♥ Obese animals are less able to regulate their body temperature and therefore overheat more easily.
- ♥ Obese pets are less flexible/have decreased range of motion which increases their risk of soft tissue injury and decreases their ability to groom properly.
- ♥ Obesity complicates proper dosing for medications.
- ♥ Obese animals have greater anesthetic risk.
- ♥ Obese animals have greater risk of surgical complications.
- ♥ Physical exams, intramuscular injections, blood draws etc are less accurate/more difficult to perform on obese pets.
- ♥ Pet food can be expensive! Feeding a proper amount of food can actually save money.

How much food should I feed my cat?

Ideally, your pet's food dose should be calculated by a veterinarian based on their current weight and energy requirements. In general, you can use the dose on the back of the pet food bag but remember that those doses are often a little high and are for healthy active animals at an ideal body weight. It is important to split their food dose into several meals and measure every meal accurately so your animal is fed an exact amount of food. Use an actual measuring cup and scrape the top so the measurement is accurate. It is also helpful to designate one person in the family to feed so that the pets are fed the same way each time and the pets are not fed twice on accident. Each animal is an individual and has unique energy requirements. If your pet is overweight, their food dose should be calculated for weight loss. We would love to have you schedule an appointment to discuss your pet's food requirements!

What kind of food should I feed my cat?

There is an overabundance of commercial pet foods available. Most of these diets are sufficient for most cats. Factors involved in choosing a pet food depend on affordability, age and health status of your pet, and how your pet tolerates the diet. Prescription weight loss diets are an excellent way to help your pet lose weight. These diets are low calorie but have the correct amount of micronutrients. When decreasing your pet's regular food you not only decrease the calories, you also decrease the amount of nutrients (vitamins, minerals, protein) they are receiving. This may cause nutrient deficiencies or cause your pet to beg for food. Prescription weight loss diets often have higher fiber and more "fill factor" to help your cat feel like they've eaten a bigger meal. Ask us about which diet is right for your cat.

Can I still feed my cat treats?

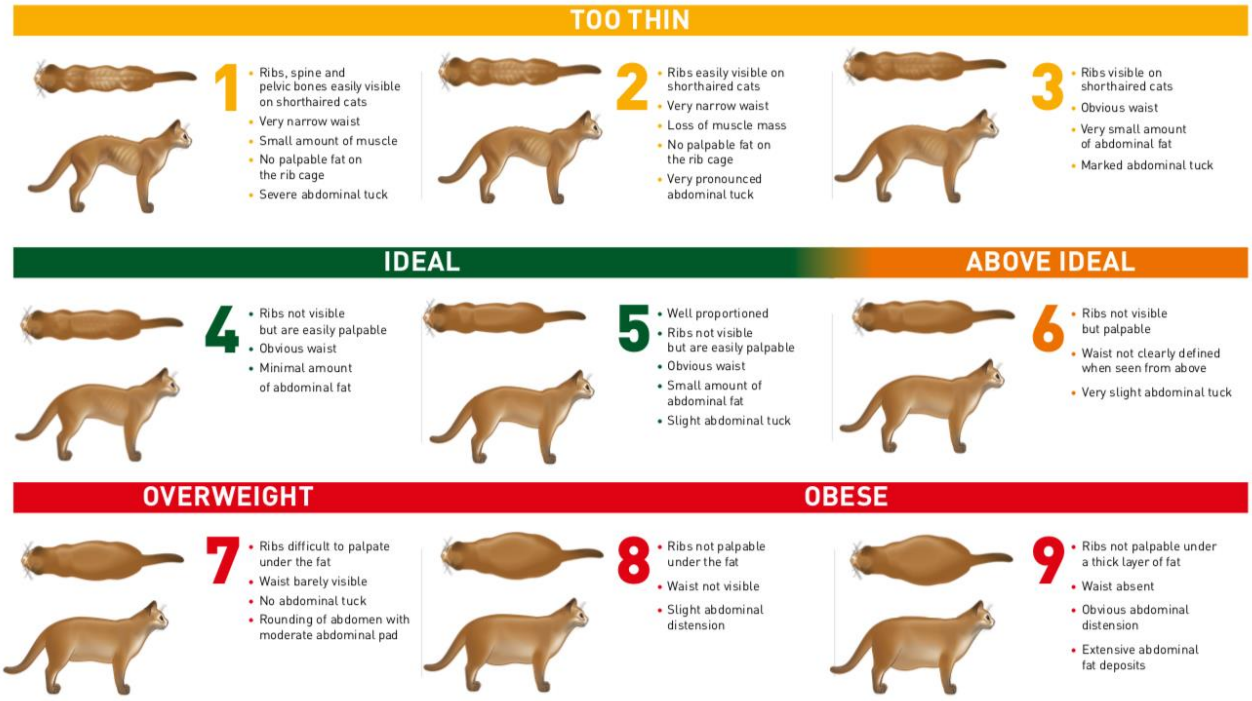
Treats are a part of how we interact and bond with our pets. Unfortunately, most pet treats are high in calories and have few nutrients. A great alternative to feeding pet treats is to use your pet's regular food "kibbles" as a treat. Most fruits and vegetables are also okay for cats. It is important to note that grapes, raisins, onions, and garlic are TOXIC to cats and broccoli, cauliflower, and brussel sprouts often cause GI upset. Many cats *do not* tolerate dairy products very well. Weight loss shouldn't also mean less attention. Let's increase their play and grooming time and decrease the amount of treats we feed to bond with them!

What else can I do to help my cat lose weight and build muscle?

Building muscle is important for stabilizing joints, decreasing risk of soft tissue injury, and increasing the metabolism. In some ways, cats are more challenging to entice to exercise.

- Feed your cat up high to encourage them to jump and climb.
- Feed in multiple places so they have to walk between the bowls.
- Hide their food around the house to encourage hunting behavior.
- Put their food inside toys so they eat slower and use more energy to get their food.

- Laser cat toys are great for motivating them to run and pounce.



More Information

- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w8mbNjpZuNM&feature=youtu.be
- http://www.indoorpet.osu.edu/cats
- http://www.petobesityprevention.org
- http://www.hillspet.com/en/us/cat-care/healthcare/overweight-cat-problems
- https://www.purina.com/cats/understanding-cat-food/is-my-cat-her-ideal-weight-or-overweight