



CARE IN PLACE

BOTTLE BABY KITTEN MANUAL

April 2026

KITTEN DEVELOPMENT



AGE	WEIGHT	MILESTONES
BIRTH	90-112 grams	Eyes and ears are closed. Sleeps 90% of time. Minimal handling. Deworming started at birth.
2-3 DAYS		Umbilical cord falls off.
4 DAYS		Begins to purr.
10-14 DAYS	224 grams	Eyes and ears should be open. Healthy kittens will be round and warm with pink skin and will rarely cry.
2-3 WEEKS	336 grams	Baby incisors erupt, can begin to eliminate without help. Will start crawling, standing and playing with littermates. Begin regular handling.
4 WEEKS	448 grams	Baby canine teeth erupt, beginning to walk but do not have great balance, will begin to groom themselves, able to thermoregulate. Continue daily handling. Ready for their first vaccine. Ready for gruel and may be ready for introduction to kitten food.
6 WEEKS	672 grams	Baby premolars erupt. Running, playing, using the litterbox, grooming themselves. Should be eating dry kitten food, supplemented with canned. Ready for surgery and adoption? Find out!
8 WEEKS	898 grams	The kittens are now “mini” cats. Definitely ready for surgery and adoption.

BOTTLE BABY HOUSING SET UP



An appropriate housing set up for a kitten from birth to three weeks of age is rather simple. They will need bedding to sleep on and a cover over the top of their heating pad to prevent the possibility of burns. Remember to keep a cozy area for them to move off the heat pad if they become too warm. At this age, do not give the kittens too much space to roam as it could be difficult for them to locate their heating pad.

Around three weeks of age, the kittens will start crawling, walking and even start to play. However, they still should not have free roam of the house. They should remain in a contained area like a bathroom or closet, as they will still need access to a warming source and a secure space.

HEAT SOURCE

Kittens are unable to regulate their body temperature until four weeks of age and will need some type of heat source. Remember, a cold kitten will not be as inclined to eat and if their body temperature drops too low they will become hypothermic and soon fade. In your care in place kit you will be provided with a non-timed heating pad. With the non-timed heating pad, you will always use it on the low setting. It is important to cover it up with some type of bedding to avoid burning the kitten but to also allow the kitten to feel the warmth from the device. It is also important to leave an area of their space unheated so the kitten can cool down by moving to another area if needed. Your heat source should be thoroughly cleaned when soiled and any damp or soiled bedding should be replaced promptly. **Please return the heating pad at the end of care.**

FADING KITTEN SYNDROME **PROTOCOL**

SYMPTOMS:

- Low body temperature (the kitten feels cool or cold to the touch)
- Extreme lethargy
- Not getting up, unable to stand, not responding when pet
- Gasping for breath
- Meowing/crying out

CAUSE:

- Hypothermia (too cold)
- Hypoglycemia (low blood sugar)
- Failure to thrive

TREATMENT: (both steps are to be followed)

1. Get them warm:
 - Immediately wrap the kitten in a towel like a burrito. Their entire body, tail, ears and paws should be in the towel, with only their nose and mouth exposed. Do not take the kitten out of the towel to adjust them, check on them, etc. - this is very important! Every time you take them out you will make them cold again, even if it is only for a second.
 - Wrap a heating pad turned onto *low* around the burrito towel (to avoid burns) as an extra source of heat. Secure it around the towel so it stays in place.
2. Get their blood sugar up:
 - Give three drops of dextrose by mouth with a syringe/finger every three minutes.
 - Set a timer to make sure you are doing this at least every three minutes.
 - If dextrose is not available, Karo syrup can be used in its place. Homemade simple syrup (1:1 ratio of water to sugar) can also be used.
 - If the kitten is not swallowing, try not to flood the mouth, instead get it on the tongue or gums.

RESULTS:

Sometimes this process takes hours before improvement is seen. Keep in mind, even with all the love, attention and treatment that we give to these fragile kittens, some of them may not make it. It is important to remember that you have done everything you could to help this kitten and any kitten you have ever fostered was given a second chance at life because of you!

DAILY CARE LOG

While caring for a neonate kitten, it is important to document their progression. The Daily Care Log will help you keep track of the times the kitten has eaten, if they are gaining/losing weight, and if they are urinating/defecating regularly.

A healthy kitten will gain 7-10 grams daily. Keeping detailed records of your kitten's habits will help ensure it is progressing at the correct rate or if there are any health issues developing. It is extremely important to weigh your kitten before and after each feeding, and to record that information. It is also important to keep accurate records of bowel movements as changes in color and consistency can be useful in diagnosing health issues.

A# _____

Age _____

Sex _____

Description _____

Foster Daily Care Log

Date	Time	Weight before food	Amount Taken	Weight after food	Type of Food	Stim? Y N	Output U F Abn	Notes/Medicines given
							U F Abn	
							U F Abn	
							U F Abn	
							U F Abn	
							U F Abn	
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HOW TO BOTTLE FEED YOUR KITTEN

1. PREPARE FORMULA

Mixing Formula: Kitten formula should be mixed at a 1:2 ratio, one part formula powder mixed with two parts warm water.

Storing Formula: Label your container with the date and time the formula was made. Keep unused powdered formula sealed and dry to prevent spoiling. Mixed formula is good for 24 hours when refrigerated. Any unused formula is to be discarded after this time frame.

Warming Formula: Formula must be warmed before being fed to your kitten. To reheat mixed formula, place the bottle in a bowl of warm water or in a baby bottle warmer. Never warm the formula in a microwave. This will cause the nutrients to breakdown, heat unevenly and can cause burns in the kitten's mouth. Once the bottle is warm, check the temperature of the formula by squeezing some on the inside of your wrist. It should be lukewarm (100 degree F). If it is too hot for you, it will be too hot for the kitten. Wash and rinse the bottle and nipple thoroughly after each feeding with soap and water.

2. STIMULATE KITTEN

Neonatal kittens are unable to relieve themselves on their own until around three to four weeks of age. To stimulate a kitten, use a warm, unscented baby wipe to dab/gently rub the genital area until all urination and defecation stops. If baby wipes are not available, you can use a soft cloth or gauze. Refrain from using cotton balls or paper towels to stimulate them as they tend to fall apart and irritate their genitals. Be sure to be gentle and not use too much

pressure or speed. This can cause irritation, leading to other health problems.

Stimulate before each feeding:

Kittens should defecate at least once every 48 hours. Their fecal matter should be toothpaste like consistency and dark yellow to brown in color. To prevent irritation, ensure the kitten is free from excess debris before returning them to their kiddy pool/bathtub. Document their output on the Daily Care Log. Ensure that you are stimulating consistently for 30-60 seconds. Stopping and starting will prevent the kitten from urinating and defecating.

Check genitals each time:

It is a good idea to check the genital area regularly for evidence of redness, sores or swelling as kittens often suckle on littermates. Suckling can damage the genital area. If you notice suckling, separate the kittens from each other.



To see a demonstration on how to stimulate, please scan this QR code to watch the video. The method for kittens and puppies is the same.

HOW TO BOTTLE FEED YOUR KITTEN

3. FEED KITTEN

1. Place the kitten on their stomach when it is time to eat. This is the same position they would feed from their mother. Never recline a kitten on their back as this will cause them to aspirate.
 2. Hold the bottle at a 45-degree angle and then place the nipple in their mouth.
 3. Slightly pull back on the bottle to help promote suckling. You will know the kitten is fully invested in the formula when their ears begin to twitch. It may take a little while for them to find the 'sweet spot,' where the kitten latches on properly to the nipple. Remember to be patient.
- Do not squeeze the bottle as this can cause too much formula to flood the kitten's mouth and can cause the kitten to aspirate.
 - Do not cut the nipple to make the hole larger.



Scan for
Tips and Tricks

When a kitten is fed formula, they will need to be burped to release any built-up excess gas. To burp them, take two fingers and gently tap on their back while holding them. You will hear and feel when the gas has been released.

Aspiration: When a kitten aspirates, the formula gets into their lungs, and you will see milk coming out of their nose. If this happens, hold the kitten's head pointed down to the ground and gently pat their back. Do not resume feeding until you are sure that there is no more formula coming from their nose.



Kitten Not Eating: If a kitten does not seem to be hungry or is refusing to eat, ensure that they are warm. A cold kitten will not eat and cannot digest food easily. Move the kitten to their heating pad and continue feeding while they are on the heating pad. If they did not urinate prior to feeding, gently stimulate them following the above instructions.

4. WEIGH KITTEN AFTER FEEDING

After each feeding, weigh the kitten to ensure they have gained 4 grams per every 100 grams of the original weight. Their belly should look round, full, but not bloated.

HOW TO BOTTLE FEED YOUR KITTEN

5. CLEAN EXCESS MILK

If the kitten has milk on their muzzle, you can wipe it clean with a warm washcloth or unscented baby wipe.

6. RETURN KITTEN TO HEAT SOURCE

After feeding is complete, return the kitten to their heat source to maintain a healthy body temperature.

7. FILL OUT THE REST OF THE CARE LOG

Complete the rest of the care log by noting how much kitten has consumed at this feeding, what was fed, if the kitten was stimulated to go potty, and if they urinated, defecated, or both. If there is anything abnormal during this feeding, such as diarrhea or other observations, please note it in the notes section of the care log.

HOW TO WEIGH A KITTEN

- Turn on the scale and wait for it to register “0”
- Ensure measurement is in grams
- Place any flat bottom container on scale
- Wait for weight to display. Touch on/off button one time
- Add towel. Touch on/off again to rest to “0”
- Wrap your kitten in a firm “purr-ito” to limit movement
- Place kitten in container and lightly tap their face to keep them calm
- Record their weight on care log (Page 5)



To see a demonstration on how to weigh a kitten, please scan this QR code to watch the video.

DETERMINING FEEDING AMOUNTS

Typically, kittens weigh 90-110 grams at birth and **should gain around 7-10 grams per day**. The only way to know if a kitten is eating enough and gaining weight is to weigh the kitten regularly. Once you have weighed your kitten (in grams), you will take the first two numbers of their weight and divide it by two. This will determine the amount that you need to feed your kitten (e.g., kitten's starting weight is 120 grams, $120/2=6$, with 6 grams being the amount to feed and the end weight will equal 126 grams). You will know when to stop feeding when your kitten's weight equals their starting weight plus the amount to feed. This method will be used until they have been weaned onto a hard food diet. Once on a hard food diet, you can free feed them hard food, one-quarter of canned food per kitten twice a day as well as fresh water at all times.

The feeding chart to the right can also be used when figuring out the proper feeding amount:

Step 1: Find your kitten's weight in the column labeled **"Weight of Kitten Before Feeding"**. If your kitten's weight is not labeled, round to the next highest number.

Step 2: Once a weight is identified on the chart, look to the "Amount of Food Consumed" column. This will tell you how much formula/gruel the kitten should be consuming at each feeding. Remember this can differ for each feeding depending on the kitten's weight.

Step 3: After the amount of formula/gruel the kitten should consume has been found, add that amount to the kitten's current weight. This number will be what the kitten needs to weigh before feeding is considered complete.

Example: A kitten weighs 209 grams, round that number to the next weight supplied on the chart, which is 220. Follow that row over to "Amount of Food Consumed" which will tell you the kitten needs to consume 11 grams. Add original weight to the amount of food to consume to find what the kitten should weigh at the end of the feeding. Once the task is complete, the kitten will weigh 220 grams.

Kitten Weight = 209

Amount of food to consume = 11

Ending weight = 220

Weight of Kitten Before Feeding	Weight of Kitten After Feeding	Amount of Food Consumed
60	63	3
80	84	4
100	105	5
120	126	6
140	147	7
160	168	8
180	189	9
200	210	10
220	231	11
240	252	12
260	273	13
280	294	14
300	315	15
320	336	16
340	357	17
360	378	18
380	399	19
400	420	20
420	441	21
440	462	22
460	483	23
480	504	24
500	525	25
520	546	26
540	567	27
560	588	28
580	609	29
600	630	30
620	651	31
640	672	32
660	693	33
680	714	34
700	735	35

TRANSITIONING KITTEN FROM **BOTTLE TO KITTEN FOOD**

INTRODUCE WET FOOD AT 3-4 WEEKS

Between three to four weeks of age the kitten's canine teeth will start to erupt. At this point, they can be transitioned onto wet food mixed with water known as "gruel."

How To Make Gruel

Gruel is a mixture of wet food (kitten wet food) mashed with warm water. Make the gruel using a 2:1 ratio, using two parts wet food to one part water.

This gruel mixture will be chunky and will require more mixing to make smooth enough with a fork or blender (if available) for the kitten to lap. Once the kitten is eating gruel consistently, reduce the amount of water added to the food each day and increase the chunkiness of the mixture.

How To Present Gruel To Kitten

Give the kitten the chance to eat independently. Place warm gruel on a shallow plate. You may need to guide the kitten to the gruel. If the kitten does not start to lap it up, you can place a small amount in the kitten's mouth with your finger or gently spoon-feed the mixture up to their mouth to help teach them to lap.

Just because you may see your kitten eating on their own, it does not necessarily mean they are eating enough to survive. This is why **daily weight checks are critical**. If they are not eating enough gruel on their own, you will need to supplemental syringe feed them

the gruel at the end of feeding. Mash the gruel until it is smooth enough to suck up in a 3mL or larger syringe.

With the kitten in the feeding position, place the syringe at the side of the kitten's mouth and very slowly push the gruel into the kitten's mouth. Allow the kitten time to swallow and breath. Do not inject the syringe full of gruel all at once, or syringe from the front of the mouth, as this may lead to aspiration.



Scan for Gruel tips and tricks

FEEDING SCHEDULE

It's extremely important to make sure kittens are staying on their appropriate feeding schedule. The Feeding Schedule column will tell you how often your kittens will need to eat.

AGE RANGE	FEEDING SCHEDULE
0-2 weeks	Formula every 3 hours
3 weeks	Formula every 5 hours
4-6 weeks	Gruel every 5-6 hours while transitioning to eating on their own
6+ weeks	Eating on own every 5-6 hours. Supplement gruel if needed.

FEEDING GUIDELINES

4-6 weeks of age

- 1/2 can of kitten wet food, 2x per day
- Free feed dry food
- Water available at all times

6-8 weeks of age

- 1/4 can of kitten wet food, 2x per day
- Free feed kitten dry food
- Water available at all times

8 weeks – 6 months of age

- Free feed kitten dry food
- Water available at all times

Tips and Tricks for Weaning Kittens onto Dry Food

Some kittens may take longer to fully transition to kibble. If the kitten is not eating well through the diet change:

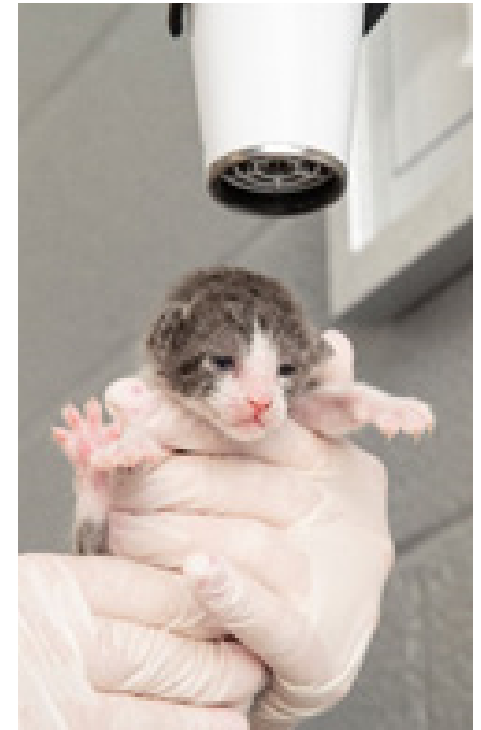
- Mix in a small amount of kitten wet food into the dry food. 1-2 tablespoons of wet food should be sufficient to make the dry food more enticing
- Mix the dry food with warm water to soften it up and make it smell stronger
- Consider spreading out feeding times an additional hour or two to ensure the kitten is hungry when food is offered

HOW TO BATHE A KITTEN

Bathing should not exceed one time per week. If you see fleas or oily debris, shampoo once with a small amount of Dawn dish soap. To remove fecal matter or food from the kitten, use a gentle kitten specific shampoo. You can also spot bathe your kitten by soaking the affected area in water until debris loosens. Ensure that your kitten is fully dried by wrapping the kitten in a towel and gently rubbing. You can use a hairdryer on low heat, if desired, to speed up the drying process. Keep the kitten in a warm, dry place until they are fully dry.

Important considerations:

- **Avoid using human shampoos:** They can be harsh and irritating for kittens.
- **Keep the water lukewarm:** Kittens are sensitive to temperature changes.
- **Dry the kitten thoroughly:** To prevent chills. Kitten under 4 weeks are unable to control their body temperature.
- **Don't get water in their ears:** This can lead to ear infections.
- **Consider spot cleaning instead of bathing:** For minor messes, a damp cloth or waterless shampoo can be gentler.
- **Bathing is generally unnecessary for kittens:** Cats are excellent groomers and typically only need baths when they become excessively dirty or have a medical condition.

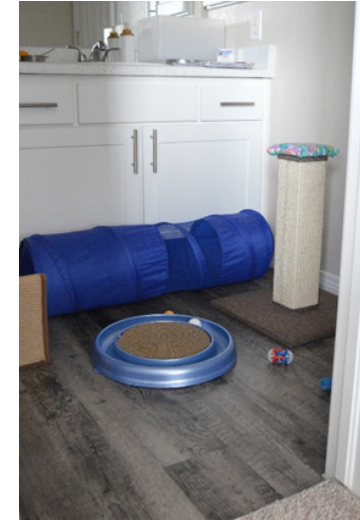


Scan the QR code to watch this informational video explaining how bathe an orphaned kitten courtesy of Maddie's Fund.



SETTING UP YOUR KITTEN'S LIVING SPACE

As your bottle baby grows, they will need a different housing arrangement. Felines tend to have a difficult time with change, so it's important to introduce new things a little bit at a time. Kittens need a small, cozy, space where they can feel safe while they acclimate to the smells and sounds of your home, and even if you don't have other pets, don't give them full run of your house. It's normal for a kitten to be a little worried and shy when they're in a new place, and they may hide until they feel safe to come out. Choose a room in your home that does not have large furniture or nooks that are difficult to get to if the kitten hides there. Instead, you'll be providing your own hiding spots. A bathroom is ideal, but any small area with a door that can be closed, and where you'll be able to access them for play time, petting, and giving medicine and treats.



- Provide multiple hiding spots. Use cardboard boxes with a dish towel or hand towel draped over it for your kitten to hide in, your kitten's carrier, a tunnel or a cat tree.
- Cardboard, carpet or sisal scratchers help kittens develop a preference for these surfaces, making it easier to prevent scratching furniture.
- If your space allows and you have a spare at home, two litter boxes are better than one, especially with multiple kittens.
- Place food and water dishes further away from their litter box. Cats don't like eating and drinking where they go to the bathroom.
- Provide toys. Kittens can amuse themselves with all kinds of things, so you don't have to have the best toys money can buy. Just make sure that they don't have little bits of string, ribbons or pieces the kitten can chew and swallow.
- Cat-proof the room. Keep the toilet lid closed, remove electrical cords, and check for openings in ducts, vents or cabinets. You'd be surprised where kittens might hide!

UNDERSTANDING NORMAL KITTEN NIPPING AND ROUGH PLAY

Play provides kittens with opportunities to practice skills they would normally need for survival, like exploring and hunting. They investigate anything that moves and may bat at, pounce on and bite objects that resemble prey.

Kittens learn how to soften their bite from their littermates and their mother. A kitten who did not have a mother or littermates may play more roughly. Also, if humans play with a young kitten using their hands and/or feet instead of toys, the kitten is liable to learn that rough play with people is okay. If you're fostering a single kitten, or they already tend to play rough, don't worry - they can be taught to play more gently.

Encourage the Behavior You Do Want

- Drag a toy, or pipe cleaner along the floor to encourage your kitten to pounce on it.
- Gently toss a toy or throw a toy away from the kitten, similar to rolling dice and give them a chance to chase it. Some kittens will even bring the toy back to be thrown again!
- A “kicker” toy is a soft, stuffed toy that kittens grab with their front feet to bite or kick. It's also one of the ways they try to play with human feet and hands, so encourage play with a “wrestling toy” by rubbing it against the kitten's belly when they want to play rough. Be sure to get your hand out of the way when the kitten seizes the toy.
- Since kittens need a lot of playtime, set up three or four consistent times during the day to play with them.

Discourage the Behavior You Don't Want

- A kitten can't be expected to learn that it's okay to play rough with an adult, but not with a child. Everyone in your home must help.
- Help discourage biting or rough play by not initiating play with your hands or feet. Keep toys within reach so you can quickly redirect the kitten's attention onto a toy rather than your limbs.
- Use Time Outs. If the distraction and redirection techniques don't seem to be working, withdraw all attention when they play too roughly. The best way to withdraw your attention is to walk away to another room and close the door long enough for them to calm down. (Usually just a minute or so.) This works better than picking the kitten up to put them in another room, because touching them might make them think you're ok with playing this way.
- Please note: None of these methods will be very effective unless you also give your kitten acceptable outlets for their energy, so play with them on a regular basis and use appropriate toys.

UNDERSTANDING NORMAL KITTEN NIPPING AND ROUGH PLAY

WHAT NOT TO DO

Attempts to tap, flick, hit or spray the kitten for rough play are almost guaranteed to backfire. The kitten could become afraid of your hands, or she could interpret those flicks as playful moves by you and play rougher.

WHAT TO DO IF THE KITTEN IS AFRAID

Avoid pulling a kitten out of hiding because this can make them more fearful. Make sure they have easy access to food, water and litter box from their hiding place. Clean the litter box and change the food and water every day so you know whether they are eating and drinking.

Keep their routine as regular as possible. Kittens feel more confident if they know when to expect daily feeding, playing, cuddling and grooming.

Avoid doing the thing that frightens the kitten. Under-socialized kittens are often afraid of hands reaching for them, or being held.

DISINFECTING SUPPLIES

Keep your foster supplies clean from any germs as that will help keep your foster kittens free from any disease or illness. It is extremely important that your supplies be disinfected between litters. To disinfect your supplies, use a bleach mixture (one part bleach to 32 parts water).

With your bottles, nipples, and food bowls, you will want to clean them similar to how you clean your dishes at home. Once this is done, submerge these items in the bleach/water mixture for five minutes, rinse, and then set out to dry.

To disinfect your heating pad and scale, you will first want to make sure they are free of any type of debris. Fill up a spray bottle with one part bleach and 32 parts water, spray down both sides of your heating pad (including the cord but not the prongs), scale, and bowl that you weigh them in. Let sit for five minutes ensuring the surfaces stay damp. After the five minutes has passed, wipe all surfaces completely dry.