

## BOTTLE FEEDING KITTENS

The formula should be given at the kitten's body temperature, about 100 degrees. Once the can is opened or the powder is reconstituted, unused formula should be kept refrigerated and discarded after 24-hours. NEVER give a kitten cow's milk (or anything else besides the specified formula).

### THE FEEDING PROCESS

It is best to feed the kittens one-by-one, and on a level surface where they aren't at risk of falling. This allows them to feed with all four feet on the surface, and their heads level, much as they would if they were nursing from their mom. Some kittens prefer to nurse standing on their hind legs while holding the bottle. They will require a little support from you in this position.

Gently open a kitten's mouth with one finger and place the tip of the nipple on his tongue. If he won't eat, try stroking him. Pull lightly on the bottle to encourage vigorous sucking. Be sure to tilt the bottle up slightly to prevent the kitten from inhaling too much air. Do not force the kitten to nurse, or allow him to nurse too fast. Avoid feeding a kitten while he is cradled on his back - if the fluid goes down the wrong way, it may end up in his lungs and cause severe illness or death.

After each feeding, the kitten should be burped. Hold him against your shoulder and gently massage his back or pat it lightly.

### THE RISK OF OVERFEEDING



**Overfeeding is as dangerous as underfeeding kittens!**

Keep an eye on your foster kittens at feeding time and monitor how much each is eating. If you see signs of diarrhea, separate them until you find out which one is sick. Your foster kittens will generally regulate their own food intake. If they need more food, they may whine or suck on their litter mates. A good indication that they are getting enough to eat is the size of their bellies - they should be filled out after a meal, but not bloated.

Listed below are the amounts and timing of feeding required at various stages of kitten hood:

Age	Weight	Amount Per Feeding	Schedule
0-1 week	50-150 grams	2-6 ml	Every 2 hours
1-2 weeks	150-250 grams	6-10 ml	Every 2-3 hours
2-3 weeks	250-350 grams	10-14 ml	Every 3-4 hours
3-4 weeks	350-450 grams	14-18 ml	Every 4-5 hours
4-5 weeks	450-550 grams	18-22 ml	Every 5-6 hours
5-8 weeks	550-850 grams	weaning: offer ample wet food	Every 6 hours

**Note: A kitten should gain 7 – 10 percent of their birth weight each day (10 – 15 grams).**

A kitten must weigh at least two pounds and be eight-weeks old before he is ready to be spayed or neutered and ready for the Adoption Center.

# FEEDING & ENVIRONMENT GUIDELINES – BY AGE

## < 1 Week of Age

**Feeding:** Bottle feed 1/2 tablespoon formula every 2 - 3 hours.

**Environment:** The temperature of the nest box should be nice and warm: 85-90 degrees. Chilling is the number one danger to newborn kittens.

**Behavior & Training:** At one week of age, the kittens should weigh 4 oz., and should be handled minimally. Kittens will sleep 90% of the time and eat the other 10%.

## 1-2 Weeks of Age

**Feeding:** Bottle feed formula per manufacturer's instruction every 2 - 3 hours until kittens are full but not bloated- usually kittens will consume at least 1/2 tablespoon of formula per feeding.

**Environment:** Floor temperature of the nest box should be nice and warm: 80-85 degrees.

**Behavior & Training:** Kittens at two-weeks of age will weigh about seven ounces. Ear canals open between five and eight days. Eyes will open between eight and 14 days. They open gradually, usually starting to open from the nose outward. All kittens are born with blue eyes, and initially no pupils can be distinguished from the irises - the eyes will appear solid dark blue.

Healthy kittens will be round and warm, with pink skin. If you pinch them gently, their skin should spring back. When you pick a kitten up, it should wiggle energetically. Healthy kittens seldom cry.

## 2-3 Weeks of Age

**Feeding:** Bottle feed formula per manufacturer's instruction every 2 - 3 hours until kittens are full but not bloated- usually kittens will consume at least 1/2 tablespoon of formula per feeding.

**Environment:** Floor temperature of the nest box should be nice and warm: 75-80 degrees.

**Behavior & Training:** Kittens will weigh about 10 ounces. Their ears will become erect. Kittens begin to crawl around day 18. Kittens can stand by day 21.

Kittens will begin to play with each other, biting ears, tails and paws even before their teeth have come in. Their milk teeth are cut during this period. Kittens learn to sit and touch objects with their paws.

Kittens begin their socialization phase. To socialize kittens, increase the amount of handling, and get them accustomed to human contact. It is important not to expose them to anything frightening; children may seem intimidating and should be supervised closely while visiting to ensure gentle handling. Young children should not handle the foster kittens.

## 3-4 Weeks of Age

**Feeding:** Bottle feed formula per manufacturer's instruction every 2 - 3 hours until kittens are full but not bloated- usually kittens will consume at least 1/2 tablespoon of formula per feeding. At this stage kittens may start lapping from a bowl.

**Environment:** Floor temperature of the nest box should be 70-75 degrees from this point onward.

**Behavior & Training:** Kittens will weigh about 13 ounces. Adult eye color will begin to appear, but may not reach final shade for another 9 to 12 weeks. Kittens begin to see well and their eyes begin to look and function like adult cats' eyes.

## 4-5 Weeks of Age

**Feeding:** 3 tablespoons (1-1/2 oz.) formula every eight hours.

They can usually drink and eat from a saucer by 4 weeks. Weaning should be done gradually. Introduce them to solid food by offering warmed canned food, mixed with a little water into a gruel, in a shallow saucer.

You can begin by placing one kitten by the plate of canned food gruel, and hoping for the best - if she starts eating, great! Her littermates will probably copy her and do the same. But without mom around to show them, many kittens do not have a clue about feeding time. The kittens will walk in it, slide in it, and track it all over the place. Sometimes one will begin lapping right away, and in its anxiety to consume as much as it can, it will often bite the edge of the plate. Some will prefer to lick the gruel from your fingers. Some will start licking your finger after they sniff it, then slowly lower your finger to the plate and hold it to the food. The kittens need to learn to eat with their heads bent down.

## FEEDING & ENVIRONMENT GUIDELINES – BY AGE (CONTINUED)

### 4-5 Weeks of Age (Continued)

Sometimes it takes two or three meals before they catch on. If they do not seem interested enough to even sniff your finger, try gently opening the kitten's mouth and rubbing a little of the food on their teeth. Hopefully then, they will start licking your finger. If they're still not getting the idea, you can take a syringe (without a needle) and squirt a small amount of gruel directly into the back of their mouths.

Be sure that the kittens have access to fresh water in a low, stable bowl.

**Behavior & Training:** Begin litter training at four weeks.

Use a low box with one inch of non-clumping litter or shredded newspaper. Do not expose the kittens to the clumping variety of litter, as it is harmful if ingested.

After each feeding, place the kitten in the box, take his paw, and gently scratch the litter. Be patient! He may not remember to do this every time, or may forget where to find the litter box, but he will learn quickly.

Be sure to give the kittens lots of praise when they first start using their boxes. Most will use it from the start, but like other babies, might make an occasional mistake. It is a good idea to confine the kittens to a relatively small space, because the larger the area the kittens have to play in, the more likely they will forget where the litter box is.

Keep the litter box clean and away from their food.

### 5-6 Weeks of Age

**Feeding:** Feed gruel four times a day. Thicken gruel gradually. Introduce dry food and water. Some kittens will not like canned food. For reluctant eaters, try mixing any meat-flavored human baby food with a little water. The meat flavor is often more appealing to the picky eaters. Be sure the brand you get does not contain onion powder as this ingredient can be hazardous to kittens.

**Behavior & Training:** At about five weeks, kittens can start to roam around the room, under supervision. They will weigh one pound. The strongest, most curious kitten will figure out how to get out of the nest. The others will quickly follow.

*Play with your foster kittens daily!* It is a good idea to wear long sleeves and pants, as they can play roughly and their claws are sharp. If you sit on the floor they will play "King of the Mountain," using your knees and shoulders as vantage points. This game is lots of fun and good exercise for them. Some kittens may be fearful at first; do not force yourself upon them. You can get them used to your presence by sitting in the middle of the room making phone calls; this way they hear your voice but do not feel threatened.

### 6-7 Weeks of Age

**Feeding:** Should be eating canned and dry food well.

Feed the kittens at least three meals daily. If one kitten appears food-possessive, use a second dish and leave plenty of food out so that everyone is eating. Bear in mind that a kitten at this age has a stomach roughly the size of an acorn, so, although they may not eat much at a single sitting, they like to eat at frequent intervals throughout the day.

**Behavior & Training:** By this time, you have "mini-cats." They will wash themselves, use scratching posts, play games with each other, their toys, and you, and many will come when you call them. Be sure to reintroduce them to their litter box after meals, during play sessions, and after naps. These are the usual times that kittens need to use the litter box.

### 7-8 Weeks of Age

**Feeding:** Offer wet food 3 - 4 times a day (each kitten will be eating a little over one can of food per day).

Leave down a bowl of dry kibble and water for them to eat and drink at will. If you have a litter with a mom cat, she should only be allowing brief nursing sessions, if any. DO NOT feed the kittens table scraps.

### 8+ Weeks of Age

**Feeding:** Offer wet food two times a day. Leave down a bowl of dry kibble and water for them to eat and drink at will.

**Behavior & Training:** By the end of the eighth week, kittens should weigh two pounds each. They are also old enough for early spay or neuter.