



VETERINARY
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CHANGING TO A NEW DIET

Cats are famous for their finicky attitude toward food, and shifting a cat from one diet to another can require finesse and patience. If your veterinarian recommends a diet change, here are some points to remember:

- **Cats must never be starved into accepting a new diet.** A cat that is suddenly starved may develop a deadly liver disorder called Hepatic Lipidosis. Fasting or rapid weight loss is dangerous for many cats.
- **Even if the cat “will eat anything,” a gradual transition to the new diet helps prevent vomiting or diarrhea from the sudden change in diet.** Other cats will eat the new food for a few days, and then steadfastly refuses to eat it.

Start changing to the new food by mixing a tiny amount of it in to the present diet, so that it cannot be picked out and left behind. If the cat refuses to eat the mixed food, it means that there is too much of the new food present—you may have to start with a pinch. Once the cat has accepted the mix—perhaps in just a day, for most cats, increase the amount of the new food, while decreasing the old. Most cats can be shifted to a new food in 7 to 10 days. If it takes longer for your cat, try to take a long view, and wait it out.

- If your veterinarian advises that the cat needs to make a faster transition, an appetite stimulant may help. Also, if the cat likes tuna juice, chicken broth, grated Parmesan, or baby food—a sprinkle of these treats can sometimes encourage cats to start eating the new food.
- If the cat has a sensitive stomach, take 2-3 weeks to make the transition, and limit additional foods or snacks. Food intolerances sometimes mean that several diets must be tested on the cat before the best choice is found.
- <http://www.catinfo.org/TipsforTransitioningPDF12-18-09.pdf> has Dr. Lisa Pierson’s detailed advice on how to move dry cat food cats to a canned diet.
- For information on the protein content of canned foods, look at <http://binkyspage.tripod.com/CanFoodNew.html>

Once the transition is complete, it is important to bring the cat to Cats Exclusive within 2 weeks to check the cat’s weight. We must make sure that the cat is eating the right amount of the new diet to maintain a healthy weight. Please call for an appointment with a technician. Weighing the cat takes only a brief visit, and there is no charge for this service.