



Feeding treats to your cat

What are treats?

Treats include any food items that are given to your cat in addition to a complete and balanced diet.

- These include snacks, chews, supplements, and foods used to administer medication.
- They may be commercially available or home prepared using food intended for people.

Facts about food treats

- Used as training aids or rewards for good behaviour.
- Provide enrichment and mental stimulation.
- May strengthen the bond with your cat.
- Too many treats can be harmful if they:
 - unbalance the main diet
 - contribute to unintended weight gain



Developing healthy treating habits

- Treats should always make up less than 10% of a cat's daily calorie intake.
- Maintaining an optimal weight is essential to supporting cat health and quality of life.
- For commercial treats, contact the manufacturer for calorie information if not stated on the label.
- Treats should never replace a meal – every cat needs a complete and balanced diet.
- Ensure that any treat offered is an appropriate size and shape to reduce the risk of choking.
- Chat with your cat's veterinary health care team to determine a suitable quantity and type of treat.
- Supervise your cat with chews, treats and toys.
- Consider alternative ways of spending fun, quality time with your cat.



Unsafe treats

- Treats must be safe and appropriate for your cat. The wrong treat, even if popular, can result in obesity^{1,2}, trauma and obstruction³. If your cat has a medical condition, dietary sensitivities, or is being fed a veterinary-prescribed diet, conventional treats may not be appropriate. Ask your veterinary healthcare team for advice if you are unsure what is suitable for your cat.
- Bones (cooked and raw) can be very dangerous and cause significant damage if chewed and/or ingested by cats.³
- Unprocessed, raw animal-based treats are a risk of pathogen transmission.^{4,5}
- Human food and table scraps can be unhealthy^{2,6} and potentially dangerous⁷ to cats.
- Toxic food ingredients include:
 - ➔ Onions, leeks, shallots, garlic, chives
 - ➔ Grapes, raisins, currants and sultanas
 - ➔ Chocolate
 - ➔ Xylitol (sweetener)
 - ➔ Alcohol and raw yeast dough
 - ➔ Caffeinated drinks, including coffee, tea and energy drinks
 - ➔ Milk and dairy products*

* Many cats are lactose intolerant, therefore consumption of these products should be avoided.

How many treats can I feed?

Treats should make up no more than 10% of a cat's daily calorie intake. The following table identifies the maximum daily calories your cat should be consuming through treats based on their current bodyweight.

Cat's body weight (kg)	2,5	3	3,5	4	4,5	5	5,5	6	7
Daily calorie intake from treats*	18	20	21	22	24	25	26	26	28

* Based on a daily calorie requirement (kcal/day) for an average healthy adult cat in ideal body condition. Please speak to your veterinary healthcare team to determine your own cat's daily energy requirement.

Below is the energy density of ten human foods that are commonly fed to cats. For many cats, consuming just one of these food types in the specified quantity could exceed their maximum recommended daily calorie intake from treats.

Food	Measure	Calories
Cottage cheese, 2% fat	1oz / 28g	25
Semi skimmed cow's milk	2 fl oz / 59ml	27
Cooked prawns	1oz / 28g	29
Canned tuna in water	1oz / 28g	36
Cooked salmon (fillet)	1oz / 28g	39
Ham	1oz / 28g	46
Lean cooked chicken breast (without skin)	1oz / 28g	47
Lean turkey breast (without skin)	1oz / 28g	50
Lean cooked beef	1oz / 28g	64
Cheddar cheese	1oz / 28g	120

References

1. Nielson, S. A., Khosa, D. K., Verbrugghe, A., & Clow, K. M. (2024). Cat caregivers' perceptions, motivations, and behaviours for feeding treats: A cross sectional study. *PLoS one*, 19(1), e0296011. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0296011>
2. Rowe, E. C., Browne, W. J., Casey, R. A., Gruffydd-Jones, T. J., & Murray, J. K. (2017). Early-life risk factors identified for owner-reported feline overweight and obesity at around two years of age. *Preventive veterinary medicine*, 143, 39–48. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.prevetmed.2017.05.010>
3. Abd Elkader, N. A., Emam, I. A., Farghali, H. A., M, D. S., & Salem, N. Y. (2020). Oesophageal foreign bodies in cats: Clinical and anatomic findings. *PLoS one*, 15(6), e0233983. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0233983>
4. Kukanich K. S. (2011). Update on *Salmonella* spp contamination of pet food, treats, and nutritional products and safe feeding recommendations. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 238(11), 1430–1434. <https://doi.org/10.2460/javma.238.11.1430>
5. Finley, R., Reid-Smith, R., Scott Weese, J., Angulo, F.J. (2006) Human Health Implications of *Salmonella*-Contaminated Natural Pet Treats and Raw Pet Food, *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, 42(5), 686–691. <https://doi.org/10.1086/500211>

6. Anon. (2013) Too many festive treats for fat cats, suggests survey. *The Veterinary Record*, 172(3), 59.
<https://doi.org/10.1136/vr.f329>
7. Cortinovis, C., & Caloni, F. (2016). Household Food Items Toxic to Dogs and Cats. *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*, 3, 26.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2016.00026>