

# Keeping Your Cat Happy Indoors

While many cats enjoy being outside where they can hunt prey and explore their surroundings, it's a myth that going outside is a requirement for feline happiness. Playing regularly with a cat easily satisfies her stalking instinct, keeps her stimulated, and provides the exercise she needs to stay healthy and happy. Here are some tips for safely confining your cat and making the great indoors an interesting, feline-friendly environment that meets all of your cat's needs.

- **Make sure your cat is spayed or neutered by 4 -5 months of age. That ensures they don't have the desire to go outside to mate and will not start spraying indoors.**
- **Start young. Kittens who are kept indoors usually show no desire to venture outside when they grow up.**
- **Provide an enclosed porch or patio room for your cat to experience the outdoors. Be careful with screens, as they can be scratched or pushed out.**
- **Install a perch near a sunny window; padded perches can be purchased at many pet supply stores or through catalog retailers. Another option is an enclosure that sits in a window frame (much like an air conditioning unit) and provides a secure space in which your kitty can "hang out." Larger options are available that attach to the side of a house or ground-floor apartment patio. It's best to allow your cat access to these when someone is home to supervise.**
- **Buy a ready-made cat tree (often called a "kitty condo"), or make your own. A cat tree may stretch from floor-to-ceiling or be shorter. It provides great climbing opportunities and, in multi-cat households, creates more play and rest areas by taking advantage of vertical space.**
- **Play with your cat each day. Try different types of toys that recreate "fishing," "chasing," and "flying" prey. And leave "toys" such as paper bags and cardboard boxes out when you are not home.**
- **Give your cat a feline friend—they can provide one another with companionship and entertainment.**
- **Plant cat grass (available from pet supply stores) in indoor pots so your feline can graze.**
- **Clean the litter box regularly.**

Even cats who are kept indoors should still be outfitted with a collar and visible identification. The occasional open window (make sure your windows have secure screens) or door offers a tempting opportunity for your cat to explore the outdoors. And your cat may become frightened and make her way outside if strangers come to work on your house or if there is a fire or similar disaster. The break-a-way collar and visible ID could help someone get your pet back to you. For extra insurance, consider having your cat micro-chipped. If you do lose your cat, contact your local animal shelter immediately to file a report. Shelter workers can give you tips on getting your pet back home safely.