

Cat: Affection Eaters



Cats who seem to eat better when they have human company are called “affection eaters.” Sometimes they just want someone to sit with them while they eat, while others enjoy being pet or need even further encouragement to eat such as having food brought close to them, hearing their kibble dish rattle, or even being spoon fed.

Affection eaters are often reacting to a scary new environment and the loss of their previous home and/or human companions, in the same way that stress can make humans lose their appetite.

Affection eating is different from medical conditions that cause cats to not eat, for example an upper respiratory infection or kidney disease. In most cases “affection eating” originates from stress and is not a medical condition. Stress-related anorexia—not eating—in cats can quickly turn into a medical concern and become deadly.

Tips to Help Your Kitty Adjust and Eat Well at Home

- For the first few days at home, confine your cat to a small, quite “safe room.” This room should have everything the cat needs: a litter box at one end of the room and food, water solo play toys, and bedding as far away from the litter box as possible. Visit your cat in this room. Start by sitting in the room quietly, and when your cat is comfortable, give plenty of gentle love and pets.
- Regular visits and affection are vital for you and your cat to bond and to help her relax. Interactive playtime is a great way to help cats relax. Exercise has stress-reducing properties for cats, just as it does for humans.
- Carefully monitor your cat’s eating. Always feed your cat a measured amount of food on a schedule, so you can tell if and how much she is eating. Please DO NOT just fill the food bowl and top it off whenever the content shrinks a little. You won’t be able to tell when or how much your cat has eaten.
- Several things can contribute to picky eating. Stale food, for example, is a common cause; another good reason to measure out food. Discard uneaten food between meals and wash the food bowl daily. Some cats do not like deep or narrow bowls, which may press on their whiskers. A shallow bowl or plate is best. Some cats prefer food that is room temperature or slightly warmed.
- If your cat is not eating well or not at all, please call your veterinarian. Anorexia can cause serious medical problems within days, for example, leading to deadly fatty liver disease if not treated quickly. For the most part, our affection eaters do well once they settle into their new home with lots of loving attention and a reassuring routine.