

CAM 4-1-1

The lowdown on cat holistic, complementary and alternative medicine.

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Thinking about trying holistic medicine for your cat? Are you unsure whom to consult or when it's appropriate? This guide to complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) will help you understand the benefits and potential pitfalls of various complementary therapies.

[Click Here](#) for a quick reference guide to CAM.

Before You Begin

Visit your veterinarian and get a diagnosis. You'll need to know the cause of your cat's ailment before you can make an informed decision about proper treatment. If your veterinarian feels unqualified to discuss holistic medicine with you, ask for a referral to another trusted professional. If you prefer to search on your own for a holistic care provider, the "Quick Reference Guide," on pages 33-34, will help you feel more prepared as you wade through the choices. Make sure the person who treats your cat does so safely, legally and effectively. Most state laws prohibit nonveterinarians from treating cats without veterinarian supervision, which protects you and your pet from unqualified practitioners. States vary in the level of supervision required. Contact the State Board of Veterinary Examiners or look for the Veterinary Practice Act on your state's website for more information specific to your location.

Know When To Finish

After finding a provider, ask for a clear set of goals and endpoints. Find out which problems will likely respond to treatment and ask specific questions about the treatment. For example, if you want herbal remedies, ask how the herbs work and whether or not research shows that they are safe for cats. Ask the herbalist which other herbs, drugs and foods might interact with the product and what signs may indicate an adverse reaction to it. Ask how long the treatment regimen will take and when to expect to see results. If you are unsatisfied with the answers or lack of them, get a second opinion from another practitioner.

When To Consider CAM

Any time your cat is diagnosed with an illness is a good time to look at CAM. Some holistic therapies may help with behavior problems. Senior cats benefit from full-body support even if they seem healthy. Holistic therapies are not meant to replace traditional medicine; they should complement it. Use them to support a healthy cat, such as energy work for a little boost. Or they can assist sick cats with long-term care. For optimal care, once a diagnosis is made, it's best to incorporate CAM early rather than save it as a last resort.

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