

## Does Sterilization Make Cats Fat?

**Arnold Plotnick, DVM, says a cat's metabolism often slows after being spayed or neutered.**

*By Arnold Plotnick, DVM*

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**Q:** I have a calico cat that was spayed about three months ago. She acts the same, just maybe not as active, but she is gaining so much weight. Her stomach is just getting huge! She runs and plays. She eats mostly dry food, although I give her a bite of canned cat food once or twice a week.

Is it normal for a female cat to gain a lot of weight in her stomach after being spayed? I have a couple more indoor cats, and the ones I had in past gained some weight. My niece's cat is a calico, and she was spayed, and her stomach is pretty big, too. I just wanted to know if this is a common thing after being fixed.

**A:** Both male and female cats will gain some weight after being neutered or spayed. Neutering and spaying will cause a cat's metabolism to slow down a bit, and may cause some of the body fat to be redistributed to other parts of the body, especially the abdomen, resulting in the notorious "abdominal fat pad."

After spaying, it is important to decrease the amount of food you feed your cat and to continue to encourage your cat to play and exercise. Although the kitten stage technically lasts for the first 12 months of their lives, it may be necessary to switch from kitten food (which has a lot of calories) to an adult maintenance food (which has fewer calories) before the end of their first year if the cat is gaining too much weight.