

As Time Goes By

CatChannel expert Jeanne Adlon, professional cat sitter, discusses what to expect as your cat gets older.

By Jeanne Adlon

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Q: What should I expect as my cat grows older, and how can I help her adjust?

A: My wonderful cat Magic, who really worked his “old black magic” to put me under his spell, is nearly 16. That’s about 77 in human years, so he’s a full-fledged senior. All I can think is gosh, where has the time gone?

Magic has always been a sweet and affectionate kitty, even more so these days. He also sleeps more now, usually on my lap whenever I get a minute to sit down. He likes to eat small meals several times a day, as I’ve seen many older cats do, and he has me well trained. I don’t dare leave the kitchen without giving him a snack. Fortunately, he still grooms himself and every now and then enjoys playing with a fishing pole cat toy.

Aging is a natural process, but you can make it easier for your senior kitty. Be on top of any changes in his behavior, and report it immediately to your veterinarian. In fact, it’s a good idea to have your cat examined twice a year for early detection. Older cats might not groom themselves as much, and this can lead to matted hair and a dull coat. Help them out with daily brushing. It will control excess hair and help stimulate circulation for a healthy coat. It can also act like a gentle massage, which is a great way to spend quality time together. Also, make sure you check and clip his nails regularly.

If your cat has trouble making it to the litterbox in time, try putting a few extra boxes in the house. I suggest one on each floor. Leave extra food and water bowls in different rooms, as well. If he has trouble bending down to reach them, there are special feeding platforms you can purchase at your local pet store. If jumping up to his favorite spot is becoming difficult, buy carpeted pet stairs for him.

Finally, no matter how old cats are, they never forget how to play, so set aside some quality time to play together. Make sure you give him frequent hugs and petting so he knows how much you love him. As always I encourage you to comment and share your stories.