

## How Can I Make My Senior Cat Comfortable?

**CatChannel expert Jeanne Adlon, professional cat sitter, discusses ways to improve quality of life for aging cats.**

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**Q:** How can I help my cat adjust to her senior years?

**A:** For many years I looked after two elderly Siamese cats, Jade, 20, and Pearl, 21. When I would arrive, they would be sleeping in their favorite spot and I'd gently wake them up so they wouldn't be startled. They would then slowly follow me into the kitchen where I would prepare food. Their owner boiled chicken with juices, mixed it in a blender and wrapped up individual meals for them. They also had varieties of baby food, but no dry food. I think Jade and Pearl were gumming their meals by then.

They would eat what they wanted and slowly walk back to their spot to continue their snooze. I chuckle when I think about what I would always whisper to both, "Please be OK until your parents get home" Their owners laughed when I told them, but it was true!

I remember a time when an 8-year-old cat was considered a senior. With more nutritious food and better medical care, cats living to 14 and older are not uncommon. If one of yours is a senior, I have some suggestions that might make his quality of life a bit better: Senior kitties like warm places to hang out. If it's a sunny window, buy a carpeted ramp or pet stairs for easier access.

If your cat has difficulty bending down to eat, try putting food on a raised platform. Pet stores sell raised feeding stations plus automatic feeders with timers for seniors who now prefer eating several small meals a day.

Check with your vet for the right senior diet for your kitty; there are many varieties, and make sure she has fresh water everyday. Try putting an ice cube in it. She might like to play with it as it melts.

A nightlight will help a senior cat with poor eyesight. If she roams around at night she could become disoriented.

Don't forget to incorporate exercise into your quality time with her. This is especially true for cats with arthritis. A fishing pole toy is always fun, or throw small treats across the room for her to chase — that is always a favorite game in my house.