

## Is Catnip OK to Give to My Cats?

**CatChannel expert Jeanne Adlon, professional cat sitter, talks about the use of catnip – in moderation.**

*By Jeanne Adlon*

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Q: What do you think about giving fresh catnip to my cats?

A: Throughout all my years of caring for cats, I have always given dry catnip to them as a treat. I think it is terrific when used in small doses, but be careful not to overdo it. I once had a client who sprinkled dry catnip on everything, including her cat's food, the poor kitty. For this cat, it would have been a treat not to have any catnip. I told her that catnip should be given occasionally, maybe once or twice a week, but never in food. Though cats eat catnip, you do not want it mixed in with their regular food because they may not eat the food without it. Again, catnip is a treat.

Most cats enjoy dry catnip, which is an herb. Its scent, especially when fresh, attracts most cats, and I have found it to be perfectly safe and fun for all. Naturally, if you ever see a bad reaction to anything you give your kitty, call or visit your vet right away. My cats really love to roll in it. You can also use it to get cats interested in a place you'd like them to be near, like a scratching post. It is also good to put a little in a cat carrier when it's time to go to the vet.

If you do not have dry catnip in the house, you probably have catnip toys for your kitty. These are fine but are not as potent as the dry catnip, which is sold in pet stores. One trick for increasing the longevity of catnip toys, which seem to lose their zing quickly, is to put them under hot water, then squeeze the water out. It rejuvenates the catnip and saves you the cost of buying new toys.

Be on the alert when your cat has been enjoying a roll in the catnip because he might play more aggressively. Other than that, enjoy the fun — your kitty will.