

## Understanding Feline Nutrition

**Your cat's diet plays an important role in its overall health. Make sure your cat's food contains the proper nutrients.**

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Clean, fresh water is vital to your cat's health. Many cats refuse to drink stale water, which can lead to dehydration. "It doesn't take long," Dr. Remillard says. An average 10-pound cat needs to drink about one and a quarter cups of water a day, she says. And most adult cats should not be given milk because they lack the enzyme to digest lactose, she says.

A cat's ideal weight depends in part on its breed and body conformation, Dr. Carey says. A Cornish Rex, for example, is naturally thin and a domestic shorthair is somewhat tubular in shape. A Maine Coon may be perfectly healthy at 20 pounds.

The average cat weighs about 8 pounds, he says. In general, you should be able to feel the ribs, but not see them. And on the other extreme end of the scale, the cat's flank folds should not shift from side to side as the cat walks.

"You should not see the tidal effect as the cat moves away from you," Carey says. If only feeding your cat was as simple as putting kibble into the crevices of a plastic toy. The challenges cat owners face when making responsible decisions to ensure their cat's health and well-being are more complex than ever. However, with an understanding of what constitutes a well-balanced diet and the specific nutritional needs of your cat, dinnertime could very well be playtime.