

Baby's First Checkup

Here's what you need to know for a stress-free and productive veterinary visit.

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Your new little fluffball entertains you with hilarious antics and classic kitten curiosity, and when finally exhausted it warms your lap and heart. You want to make sure your kitten stays safe and healthy for a long, happy life. Contemplating that first veterinary checkup brings many questions to mind perhaps even some anxiety. Is your kitten as healthy as it seems? Most likely the answer is a resounding "Yes," and your veterinarian will gladly confirm this. Then he or she will give you all the tools you need to keep your kitten that way. Before setting out, gather the following items: 1. The kitten's previous medical history, including records of vaccinations or dewormings. 2. Type of kitten food your kitten is eating. 3. A fresh stool specimen. (No more than a tablespoon is needed.) 4. A pet carrier. 5. A list of any questions you have for the veterinarian. Jot down any symptoms of illness you may have noticed, such as scratching at the ears, sneezing or soft bowel movements. 6. Include any behavior problems, such as spats with another pet. 7. Pet health insurance information, if you have it. Arrive a little earlier than your appointment time to fill out necessary paperwork. A staff member will escort you and your kitten to an examination room, where the kitten's weight and temperature will be recorded. An accurate body weight requires a measurement in grams or ounces, since 6- to 8-week-old kittens may weigh one pound or less, and small losses or gains may therefore be significant. At subsequent visits, weighing the kitten will document normal growth. Failure to gain weight represents an early red flag that something's amiss.