

Top 10 Reasons to Spay or Neuter Your Cat

These surgeries can benefit both you and your pet.

Stacy N. Hackett

It's difficult to imagine your kitten growing up and having babies of her own. But female kittens can become pregnant as early as 6 months old, and once she has her first heat, she can have up to three litters per year. Convincing evidence to have your sweet little pet spayed, isn't it? In addition, your male kitten can father hundreds of kittens if he isn't neutered. Still not convinced? Look over these reasons spay or neuter surgery can benefit your pet and other animals.

1. Spaying or neutering your cat helps prevent pet overpopulation. The Humane Society of the United States estimates that 3-4 million cats and dogs are euthanized by shelters every year. This number doesn't include the millions of stray animals with shortened lifespans. By spaying or neutering your cat, you'll prevent unwanted litters and save lives.
2. Spay and neuter surgery can help stop or prevent spraying behaviors. Spaying or neutering your cat before she or he reaches puberty (six to eight months of age) is the best preventive measure against spraying, says Elaine Wexler-Mitchell in her book *Ask the Vet About Cats*. If you neuter your male kitten before his hormones kick in and encourage territorial marking behavior, you increase the chance that he'll never learn to spray.
3. Spay surgery can prevent your female cat from developing mammary cancer. It is actually healthier for a cat to be sterilized before heat cycles begin, Wexler-Mitchell says. Cats that start going through heat are at a much higher risk of developing mammary cancer later in life.
4. Spaying eliminates the chance of your female cat developing uterine infections. Because the uterus is removed completely during spay surgery, spayed female cats have no risk of metritis or pyometra, infections of the uterus, Wexler-Mitchell explains.
5. Spay surgery can help prevent loud vocalizations from your female cat. Females in heat can cry incessantly, states the Humane Society of the United States. Because she won't go into heat, your female cat won't keep you up at night howling for male attention.
6. Neutering can make your male cat a better pet. Neutering does not alter the good parts of a male cat's personality, but it does decrease aggressive and territorial tendencies, Wexler-Mitchell says. The HSUS agrees: Unsterilized animals often exhibit more behavior and temperament problems than do those who have been neutered.