

Does Your Cat Have a Fever?

A vet explains how to recognize a feline fever and take a cat's temperature.

Elaine Wexler-Mitchell, D.V.M.

Q. How can I tell if my cat has a fever?

Elaine Wexler-Mitchell, D.V.M., says: Cats with fevers are generally lethargic and have no appetite. Although popular culture has led us to believe that a healthy cat has a cold, wet nose and therefore a warm, dry nose is indicative of a fever, this is not always true. Many conditions including environmental temperature and the cats state of hydration affect how cold and wet a nose is. If your cats ears feel hot to the touch she may have a fever. The only reliable way to determine if your cat has a fever is by taking her temperature. A cats normal body temperature is typically between 100.5 and 102.5 degrees Fahrenheit. Human ear thermometers are not reliable for taking your cats temperature due to the way they are calibrated and the different shape of a cats ear canal. There are special ear thermometers for animals that are useful with cats, but they cost several hundred dollars. The best and most economical way for you to take your cats temperature is by using a pediatric rectal glass or digital thermometer. Taking your cats temperature usually takes two people: one to restrain the cat and the other to insert the thermometer.

Conventional thermometers should be lubricated with petroleum jelly or water soluble lubricants such as K-Y Jelly and left in the rectum for two minutes. Digital thermometers are lubricated and left in the rectum until they beep. On hot days or if a cat is stressed, her body temperature may reach 103.5 degrees Fahrenheit. Veterinarians are concerned when temperatures reach 104 degrees Fahrenheit or higher. Aspirin is not routinely used to bring down a fever in a cat. If your cat does have a fever you should bring her to your veterinarian as soon as possible.

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