



Recommendations for transitioning from other foods

There are several methods for transitioning cats to a raw-meat diet. A cat's natural instinct is to 'fixate' on food, which helps kittens to learn what *is* food and to recognize it when they see and smell it. What is sometimes referred to as a cat being 'finicky' is really a manifestation of this natural tendency.

Some cats require a gradual transition to a raw diet, while others take to it immediately. Use the method that seems to fit the cat's personality best.

When changing to a raw meat diet, we recommend eventually stopping all feeding of dry food – completely.

Commercial dry foods are sprayed with oils and 'flavors' to make it palatable to cats. Cats who may be fixated on dry food may 'wait it out' to get their kibble rather than try a new food. Cats will typically not be hungry between meals– it is more natural for cats to gorge and fast than to graze. However, when transitioning, it is not healthy for cats to miss too many meals or eat meals that are smaller than usual for days at a time. This can cause rapid weight loss, which may lead to serious health issues.

The ultimate goal is to bring adult cats to a feeding schedule of two meals per day, with no kibble fed. The cat's current diet may dictate the transition method used. The following are recommendations only. Work with a qualified holistic veterinarian and the cat's individual needs.

Special note: Any change in a cat's diet can bring stomach upset. Even if a cat loves their new raw diet immediately, they should be transitioned slowly. If they transition too quickly, any stomach upset may result in the cat soon rejecting the raw diet because they link their stomach upset to the food.

Transitioning cats currently on a kibble diet only: Begin by offering a small sample. If they taste the sample at all, begin offering small amounts as a treat in the morning and evening. Gradually reduce the quantity of kibble left out for the day. Move toward one set meal in the morning and one in the evening with the raw and dry food, slowly increasing the raw portion and decreasing the kibble until the cat is completely transitioned.

Another option is to transition to a commercial wet food, then transition to the raw diet from the canned food.



Transitioning cats currently on wet food only: Begin a feeding schedule of twice per day. Place small amounts of the raw diet next to the regular diet or mix with their current wet food. Gradually begin increasing the ratio of raw to canned until the transition is complete.

Transitioning cats currently eating both dry and wet food: Slowly move to a feeding schedule for the wet food twice per day and reduce the amount of kibble left out during the day for grazing. Add small amounts of the raw diet to the canned wet food or offer as a separate treat at meal time. Gradually begin offering kibble only during meals, and eventually not at all.

For cats that have trouble recognizing a raw diet as *food* and are completely ignoring it all together, here is something to try:

Place a tablespoon of raw food next to their regular food. This will let the cat begin to associate raw food with their meal time. It may be a slow process, with the cat only sniffing it at first, but gradually, they begin to decide this might also be food, will taste it, and eventually begin a transition.

Note: Any change to a cat's diet can cause digestive upset, so close monitoring through the transition period is essential. Go slow, use caution, and consult a holistic veterinarian.

Safe handling: Always handle raw cat food the same as any other raw meat product. Clean surfaces immediately and never leave the raw food where small children can have access to it. Also, after offering raw food to cats, do not leave the food out for more than 30 minutes and discard all left-overs.



Additional Notes on feeding

- Feed adult cats approximately 3.5 ounces (a healthy 1/4 to 1/3 cup) twice per day, based on the cat's age, size and activity level. Younger cats may eat larger meals. Weaned kittens should be fed multiple small meals throughout the day.
- It is best to serve food at room temperature. Do not cook.
- Raw chicken or turkey necks are great treats for exercising those chewing and gnawing muscles. The cartilage and bone are added nutrition for cats. Unlike the softer nature of raw bones, cooked bones are potentially hazardous because they can splinter. Raw bones are a natural part of a cat's diet. Some cats may reject pieces of chicken necks and act like they don't know what to do with them. If this happens, try again every few days or once per week. A raw diet brings back some of that carnivorous instinct. When cats eventually 'get it', they really enjoy them.



Some changes to expect

- After a full transition to a raw diet, cats typically will drink less water. Cats in the wild get most of their water from their food. A raw meat diet naturally contains more moisture than dry or canned food, so your cat may be less thirsty, yet be getting plenty of water.
- There may be a change in the volume, odor, and color of feces. It will stink less! It may also be somewhat harder and dryer and be colored shades of dark and light brown. Much of the crude protein and crude fiber in most commercial dry and canned cat foods is not digestible and contributes to a higher volume of stool. Along with the assurance of knowing that all the food that is *ingested* is being *digested*, the reduction of odor is a nice side-benefit.
- Overweight cats tend to lose weight. However, weight loss must be closely monitored. Rapid weight loss can lead to serious health problems. A holistic veterinarian who is skilled in transitioning to raw diets can provide the best advice, especially when transitioning a cat with chronic health issues.
- Lethargic cats start to play more and may even exhibit hunting behavior. Cats are healthiest when fed a high protein, low carbohydrate diet. When cats aren't experiencing the metabolic highs and lows associated with high carbohydrate intake from grains, they will use protein as their energy source, as they were designed by nature to do. This tends to provide more sustained energy throughout the day and reduces the need to "graze".
- Allergies tend to clear up, which may be a result of less exposure to potential food allergens. Many cats have allergies to grains that can range from very mild to severe. These allergies can manifest on the skin, can affect digestion, and also contribute to runny nose and eyes. The reduction in allergic symptoms may be a result of not only a reduced exposure to allergens from a higher quality food, but also from a stronger immune system. The more nutritious the food, the stronger the immune system will be.
- Fur becomes incredibly soft and shedding is reduced. This can be the result of better nutrition and is typically one of the initial benefits observed after changing cats to a raw diet. There may also be a reduction in human allergic reactions to cats due to the reduction of dander.

This information is not intended to diagnose or to give treatment for any disease. A veterinarian should always be consulted with any health concerns.