

# Kitten Feeding Guidelines For Fosters

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These are guidelines only. Every kitten is different. Just like humans, they develop at different rates and have different preferences (dry vs canned, pate' vs chunky, poultry vs seafood flavors, etc).

- If you aren't having success with getting kittens to eat, as long as the kitten is a healthy weight and acting normal, go ahead and try a different food (dry vs canned, different flavor, etc).
- If the kitten doesn't eat for 24 hours and/or isn't acting normal please contact [fostertech@hshv.org](mailto:fostertech@hshv.org) during normal business hours before it becomes an emergency.
- Don't put too many choices out at one time. That can be overwhelming for the kitten and makes it harder to assess their preferences. It is best to put only a few options out at one time. If the kitten isn't interested in anything, remove most of those options and try one or two more at the next feeding.
- Don't put out large volumes of food at once. Canned food gets dried out and dry food loses some of its smell.
- Always separate kittens when feeding canned food so you can make sure they all have access to their own portions without being pushed away by other kittens. This also helps you notice if one kitten isn't eating well.
- BIRTH TO WEANING KITTENS (birth to around 3 weeks of age): These kittens are nursing from Mom or being bottle fed with milk replacer multiple times a day. (see separate handout for guidelines if bottle feeding)
- WEANING OR CUSP KITTENS (3 to 4 weeks of age): These kittens are figuring out how to eat solid food after nursing or being bottle fed. Their "baby" teeth erupt between 3 and 5 weeks of age so chewing food is difficult.
  - Initially these kittens typically need soft, smooth, and easy to eat foods (Royal Canin Mother and Baby cat canned Ultrasoft Mousse is one example) during the transition period.
  - A milk replacer (e.g. Breeders Edge) may need to be mixed in to encourage the kitten transition to solid food.
  - Dry kibble can be offered, but it needs to be smaller sized pieces like Royal Canin Mother and Baby Cat, Purina Kitten Chow, or Iams Kitten. The kibble can be soaked in water or mixed up Breeder's Edge to make a mash which is easier to eat.
  - At this age kittens have poor depth perception and have trouble finding the food so you may need to help them by bringing the food up to them (holding the dish for them or spoon feeding them).

- Some of these kittens will start to eat solid food and then regress to needing Mom or the bottle again for a few feedings because they aren't efficient at eating the solid food.
  - It is important to closely monitor their weight and how much they are eating.
  - Feeding amount: Unless otherwise directed, each kitten should be offered about  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 can (3oz size) of kitten food divided into 4 feedings per day along with freshwater and any amount of dry kitten food they will eat. If they aren't gaining weight, this amount may need to be adjusted.
  - As these kittens grow and get used to solid food they can be gradually transitioned to the foods listed under weaned kittens.
- WEANED KITTENS (5 weeks and up): These kittens are typically eating solid food pretty well on their own and have all of their baby teeth present.
    - They can be offered a more textured canned food such as Purina Kitten Chow, Purina ProPlan, Iams Kitten Pate', etc.
    - Some of them may even prefer canned food with chunks.
    - Larger sized dry food kibble such as Science Diet Kitten should be added at this time (this is the main food we offer in the shelter so it should be introduced to kittens at least a week prior to their return to the shelter).
    - They can also have other dry kitten foods mixed in if they aren't eating the Science Diet dry well (e.g. Purina Kitten Chow, etc).
    - These kittens still need their weight and appetite monitored to make sure they are gaining weight.
    - Feeding amount: Unless otherwise directed, each kitten should get around 1 to 1.5 cans (3oz size) of kitten food divided into 3 feedings per day along with freshwater and any amount of dry food they will eat. If they aren't gaining weight, this amount may need to be adjusted.

**For emergencies, please contact the Foster emergency number 734-717-4424**

**Non-emergent concerns, please email [FosterTech@hshv.org](mailto:FosterTech@hshv.org)**

If you are unsure if it is an emergency then call or text the emergency number.

For supply requests – Please email [fosters@hshv.org](mailto:fosters@hshv.org) or call 734-661-3520. It may take up to 48 hours for supply requests to be fulfilled.