

GROOMING AND MAINTENANCE

Your feline will look (and feel!) like the cat's meow after a good grooming session.

By nature, cats are extremely fastidious. You've no doubt watched your kitty washing herself several times a day. For the most part she can take care of herself very well, thank you, but sometimes she'll need a little help from you.

Make Grooming as Enjoyable as Possible—For the Both of You!

Grooming sessions should be fun for the both of you, so be sure to schedule them when your cat's relaxed, perhaps after exercise or eating. You want your pet to remember grooming sessions in a positive way, so you never want to risk losing your temper. If you've had a stressful day or are in a bad mood, it's probably not a good time to groom your cat.

Keep your first grooming sessions short—just 5 to 10 minutes. Gradually lengthen the time until your pet is used to the routine. You should also get your pet used to being handled. Get in the habit of petting every single part of your cat—including ears, tail, belly and back—and especially the feet!

And keep in mind, a little patience can go a long way. If your cat is extremely stressed out, cut the session short and try again when she's calmer. Unfortunately, most cats do not like baths, so you may need another person to help. And remember to pile on the praise and offer her a treat when the session is over.

Giving a bath

Cats use their tongue and teeth for grooming. Every time Tabby goes into her contortionist bathing routine, she's swallowing hair. The more hair she has (and the more grooming she does), the more hair she swallows. Hair doesn't digest and can clump up in a cat's stomach and intestines to form hairballs. The least dangerous, but still rather unpleasant, side effect of hairballs is your cat coughing them up -- quite often at times or in places you'd much rather she didn't. On a more serious note, a lot of swallowed hair can actually block your cat's intestines, calling for an operation to save her life. The bottom line is to invest in a brush and comb -- and use them.



Generally speaking, an average medium to longhair cat only needs a bath once or twice a year. Shorthair cats don't need a bath unless they go outside.

Nails

For the sake of your own limbs and your furniture, clip the nails of your cat regularly. Because they move only inside, their nails don't get worn down like they would if living outside.

Though you should never declaw, you may defray some of your cat's potential for destruction by carefully trimming the razor-sharp tips of her claws. You will find this endeavour more easily accomplished by two people, one to hold Kitty and one to trim her nails. Though she enjoys other forms of pampering, Kitty will not find a manicure soothing.

Gently hold Kitty's paw in one hand and with your thumb on top of the paw and forefinger on the pad gently squeeze your thumb and finger together. This will push the claw clear of the fur so it can easily be seen. You will notice that the inside of the claw is pink near its base. This is living tissue that you do not want to cut. *Trim only the clear tip of the nail.* Do not clip the area where pink tissue is visible nor the slightly opaque region that outlines the pink tissue. This will avoid cutting into areas that would be painful or bleed.

If your kitty goes frantic half way through the process, stop for today and start again the next day. Or if you are afraid that you might fall out of favour, take her to the vet and get it done there.

Teeth

If you are (or your kitty) is not comfortable to have a grooming session concerning the teeth, have the vet check them on a regular basis.

Here is why that is so important:

1. Cats don't naturally have horrible breath

Even if a cat eats tuna every day, his breath should not smell bad. If your cat's breath smells like something is rotting in his mouth, the odds are that he has an infection or tooth decay.

2. Dental disease is very painful

Have you ever had an abscessed tooth or serious gum disease? If so, you know it hurts! It hurts cats, too, but our feline friends are masters at hiding their pain. It's an ingrained and instinctive survival technique. The only indication you may have of your cat's pain is a change in temperament. Even with sore teeth and gums, a cat will still eat because hunger trumps pain - until the pain gets too severe.

3. Dental disease doesn't just stay in your cat's mouth

An infection that begins as gingivitis can progress to the point where your cat develops infections in the bones, lungs, and even the bloodstream itself. The cost of treating a life-threatening systemic infection is a hell of a lot higher than the cost of those annual cleanings.

4. Dental disease can complicate other diseases

Diabetic cats with dental disease, for example, suffer more than others because chronic oral infections make it difficult to keep blood sugar levels under control.

5. Dental disease can lead to other diseases

Research has shown that dental disease increases the risk of diabetes, infections of the heart and lungs, kidney disease, autoimmune diseases, arthritis, heart failure, and even cancer.



Water additives are one of the simplest ways to help maintain your cat's oral health. Although brushing your cat's teeth is an essential part of a dental care routine and should not be skipped, dental rinses and water additives offer several benefits and are safe to use. Adding a water additive to your cat's drinking bowl each day, or as often as recommended by your veterinarian, can help eliminate bacteria, prevent plaque and tartar buildup, and keep your cat's breath smelling fresh.

EARS

Most cats do a great job of keeping their own ears clean. Their grooming habits are so meticulous that they will even clean behind and in the inner flap of the ears. However, cats will sometimes need help cleaning their ears. It's also a good idea to frequently check your cat's ears to look for problems lurking inside the ears that could become more serious.

Warnings

- A number of diseases and conditions can plague a cat's ears. These include ear mites, ticks, fleas, bacterial infections, yeast infections, foreign bodies (such as plant awns), and, very rarely, tumours. The most common ear problem among cats is otitis external, an infection of the outer parts of the ear in front of the eardrum. If ever you have concerns about the health of your cat's ears, consult your vet.
- Bleeding after cleaning is not normal. If you notice any blood around your cat's ears after cleaning them, take your cat to the vet immediately.