

This Single Daily Decision Could Make or Break Your Precious Pet's Health

You make this choice for your pet every single day, and it has a major impact on her health. Messing it up can lead to a range of health issues from obesity to chronic disease. But do it right, and you could revolutionize her health, well-being, and even devotion.

Reviewed by **Dr. Becker**

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Well over half of pet cats in the U.S. are overweight or obese
- To help your cat lose weight, first make the switch from dry food to canned food, and then to a raw homemade or commercially prepared diet
- Calculate the amount of calories your kitty should be eating each day to reach her goal weight, and serve individual portion-controlled meals
- Get rid of processed treats. Instead, offer cat-safe, low-fat cubed meats, or fresh fruit and cooked veggies in moderation
- Provide the tools, time and creative incentive your cat needs to exercise every day

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It's a fact that almost 60% of house cats in the U.S. are overweight or obese. It's also a fact that the formula for a fat cat is:

- An inappropriate diet, including junk food treats
- Free feeding and/or over feeding
- Insufficient exercise

If you're the parent of a corpulent kitty and you've committed to dieting your furry family member down to a healthy weight, the first step is to make a slow, gradual switch from dry food to canned food, then to either a balanced homemade or commercially prepared **species-appropriate diet**.

Here's What Biologically Appropriate Cat Food Looks Like

"Species-appropriate" for cats means a diet of animal protein that is moisture-rich and very low in carbohydrates. For example, a popular commercial raw organic chicken diet for cats consists of 98% chicken necks (with ground bone), backs, thigh meat, gizzards, livers and hearts.

The manufacturer adds a small amount of fish oil and a nutrient mix that includes important trace minerals, sea salt, and vitamins from natural sources, as well as organic psyllium husk fiber.

There are no grains in this diet, and the protein comes from real meat, not vegetables, not plants and not meat byproducts. This meat-based diet is best fed raw, or very gently cooked.

How Much Should Your Cat Eat Every Day?

Since a fresh food diet can't be free-fed due to spoilage, you've solved two problems at once by transitioning your chunky kitty away from kibble. Most likely you're feeding two meals a day, morning and evening, so now the goal is portion control of those two meals to insure you're not overfeeding.

Let's say your chunky kitty weighs 18 pounds and you and your veterinarian believe his ideal weight is 14 pounds. The following formula will give you the amount of calories he should consume each day to lose those 4 pounds. First, convert his goal weight to kilograms by dividing by 2.2:

$$14 \text{ pounds divided by } 2.2 = 6.36 \text{ kilograms}$$

Second, multiply the kilograms by 30 and then add 70:

$$6.36 \text{ kilograms } \times 30 = 191 + 70 = 261$$

Third, multiply that result by 0.8:

$$261 \times 0.8 = 209$$

Your 18-pound cat should eat 209 calories a day, or about 104 to 105 calories at each of his two daily meals, to reach his 14-pound goal weight. If you also offer him treats, you'll need to determine how many treat calories you're feeding, and reduce the amount of food accordingly to maintain the 209 calories-per-day total.

This isn't something you should do on a regular basis because treats — even homemade ones — don't offer the balance of nutrients found in a species-appropriate, fresh food diet.

In addition, most processed pet treats are loaded with sugar and preservatives. Most cats will transition from junk food treats to cubed low-fat meats quite easily.

But surprisingly, many cats will also eat fresh produce (think "roughage"), and there are some fruits and vegetables you can safely feed to your cat as occasional treats that are high in antioxidants and fat-free.

Cat-Safe Veggies and Fruits for Snacking

- **Apple slices (no cores or seeds)** — Contain powerful antioxidants and vitamin C

- **Kale** — Loaded with vitamins (especially vitamins K, A, and C), iron and antioxidants
- **Cantaloupe** — Loaded with vitamins C and A
- **Baked sweet potatoes** — Rich in beta-carotene and antioxidants, high in vitamins A and C
- **Bananas** — A rich source of potassium and fiber
- **Steamed green beans** — Contain vitamins A, C, and K, beneficial minerals and beta-carotene
- **Baked carrots** — Low in calories and high in fiber and vitamins
- **Steamed spinach** — Has anti-inflammatory properties
- **Steamed broccoli** — Contains healthy fiber and beneficial nutrients including potassium, calcium, protein, and vitamin C
- **Steamed asparagus** — A rich source of vitamins and minerals
- **Fermented veggies** — Potent detoxifiers that contain high levels of probiotics and vitamin K2
- **Cooked or canned 100% pumpkin** — An excellent source of fiber, vitamin A, and antioxidants

All the fruits and vegetables above are safe for cats. If your kitty will eat them, remember to:

- Cook the veggies to prevent choking and improve digestibility
- Serve them plain (no sugar, salt, spices, butter or other additives)
- Offer them only occasionally, and in very small portions

Foods you never want to offer your cat include onions, garlic, chives, **grapes**, and raisins.

5 Tips for Helping Your Cat Exercise

1. Make sure kitty has things to climb on, like a multi-level cat tree or tower.
2. Invest in a laser toy, either an inexpensive one, or something a bit more sophisticated like the Frolicat™ line.
3. Choose toys and activities that appeal to your cat's hunting instinct.
4. Don't overlook old standbys, like dragging a piece of string across the floor in view of your cat. Ping-pong balls are another oldie but goodie, along with bits of paper rolled into balls, and any light object that can be made to move fast and in unexpected ways.
5. Walk your cat in nice weather using a harness. This gets him out into the fresh air, stimulates his senses and gets his paws in direct contact with the ground. An alternative is a safe, fully enclosed porch or patio area that prevents your cat from getting out and other animals from getting in.



Sources and References

[Kitty Lover News \(Archived\)](#)

[VetStreet March 5, 2015](#)
