



The Basics on Babies – Bottle Feeding Newborn kittens

As kitten season brings lots of calls for help for bottle-feeding age foster kittens abandoned (unwanted by people or sometimes by the mother cat), we hope the following timely tips on caring for newborn kittens helps rescuers save even more kittens.

WEIGHT KITTENS DAILY, this is the only way to know if they are healthy.

Feeding tips

- Imported kitten formula is best, but if this is unavailable, feed plain soy milk (unflavored and no sugar) or goat milk until you have formula
- **Avoid cow's milk** as it is not nutritious enough and can cause diarrhea
- Newborn kittens should feed about 8 times over 24 hour day
 - over a 24-hour period, kittens should eat about **25 mL/cc of formula for every 3.5 oz. of kitten** = about 2 tablespoons per 3.5 ounces, so a two week old kitten should eat 50+mL a day
 - **kittens should gain 4 oz a week, KEEP A CHART**, if not gaining this indicates that they may be getting sick.
- Prepare the formula with bottled or purified water in a sterilized bottle, cut a small hole in the sterilized nipple, and let bottle cool before feeding (test if it is body temperature by dabbing on inside of your wrist). Formula should slowly drip from nipple when upside-down
- Hold kitten or wrap the kitten in a small blanket for feeding
- If kitten is unable to suckle, stimulate sucking reflex by stroking head and neck
- **Do not lean the head too far back**; there is a risk kitten will aspirate formula (breathing it into lungs)
- **Copy how kitten would be positioned when nursing on mom, tummy down**
- **Burp kitten** with one hand under abdomen while gently patting back
- Wash the bottle and nipple thoroughly between feedings.



Toileting tips

- Newborn kittens will not eliminate their bladder and bowels on their own (this takes around 3 weeks to learn); rescuers must stimulate kittens
- After feeding, stimulate elimination by using a warm, damp paper towel or cotton square and rubbing around the back end and over genitals until pee or defecate

General handling & care tips

- Isolate kittens from pets until a vet advises otherwise; kittens have a fragile immune system and are vulnerable to infection
- Wash hands well after handling kittens and clean clothes, towels/blankets and surfaces regularly. Kittens could be sick and contagious to pets
- Handle kittens for 10–15 minutes at a time; kittens need to be nurtured and socialized
 - hold often for short periods and stroke gently
 - gradually introduce kittens to everyday noise, other people, and when a vet deems it safe to do so, to other pets
- Keep kitten at 80 degrees F (26.7 C) in a room with no draft – but prior to 7 days old, 90 degrees F (32 C) with no draft
 - keep the kitten wrapped in soft blankets and in a safe 'nest' but do not cover the face
 - place kitten on a warm hot water bottle (be sure that seal on top is secured) or low heat PET heating pad that gets no warmer than 101 F (made by K&H Pet Products)
- Clean kitten all over with a barely damp washcloth in short gentle strokes; this teaches grooming and stimulates bowel movements
- Line crate or box with disposable diaper pads to keep bed clean and save on laundering towels (top loading pet carrying crates work well). At 3–4 weeks add low cardboard litterbox filled with a grain based litter or old fashioned NON-clumping litter. Show how to use.



Dealing with possible concerns

- Loose stool
 - formula may be too rich, try adding a bit of water
 - check temperature to ensure no infection and watch for dehydration (loose skin that does not retract when pulled from the neck)
- Not urinating and/or defecating
 - repeat the stimulation to release bladder and bowels with a slightly rough towel around affected areas
 - add more water to dilute formula
 - if prolonged (e.g. kitten not defecating over 72 hrs), call your veterinarian for advice
- Sneezing and runny nose
 - this could be a sign of respiratory infection, seek medical attention right away
- Fleas & worms
 - If bad flea infection IMMEDIATELY bathe with Dawn dishwasher soap in warm water, dry thoroughly and put near heater inside carrier (not too close) until thoroughly dry, fleas can kill a kitten.
 - Gently comb fur with flea comb; do not apply flea treatment without medical evaluation of kitten and safety of product; unless medically necessary (e.g. to prevent anemia), kittens first flea treatment given around 6 weeks old
 - same as with flea treatment, do not administer worming treatment without medical evaluation
- Quick breathing or panting
 - up to 30 breaths a minute is normal; faster than that requires a vet visit
- Kittens suckling on each other --discourage kittens from suckling on each other; separate kittens if suckling on genital area. This is extremely important, very harmful to kitten.



*Foster mom Lori Runge takes on surrogate cat mom role for 3 abandoned kittens
Second Chance Animal Aid,
Shanghai, China
www.scaashanghai.org*