

From your veterinarian

4 TIPS for bringing your cat to the veterinarian

We know it can be tough to wrangle your cat for a trip to the veterinarian's office. Many cats dislike the cat

carrier as well as riding in the car, so heading in for an annual checkup can sometimes be a stressful proposition. Follow these four tips when you head to your next veterinary appointment to reduce your cat's stress and make for a calmer car ride.



1 Make the carrier your cat's second home.

Cat carriers are typically associated with many unpleasant things. Many cat owners keep the carrier in a closet or in the garage, so the cat hasn't rubbed on it or slept inside it. Cats who haven't transferred their scent to the carrier, therefore, see it as a foreign object. So give your cat time to mark the carrier with facial rubbing—she'll feel like it belongs to her, and you may find it easier to place her inside. If you have room, make the carrier a part of your family room furniture. That means leaving it out all the time with the door open. Place a soft towel inside to make it a little more cozy. Pretty soon, your cat won't think twice about entering the carrier.

2 Turn the carrier into a meal center.

Put part of your cat's daily food in the carrier to help your cat associate something good with the carrier. Even better: Use a bit of especially yummy food, like canned food or even a little tuna. Or try tossing your cat's favorite treat in the carrier when she wants to be left alone. This will reward her for seeking solitude in the carrier and continue to reinforce the notion that the carrier isn't so bad after all.

3 Try a different kind of carrier.

If you have an emergency and don't have time to let your cat adjust to the carrier, try using a pillowcase as a carrier. With the cat on your lap, slip the pillowcase over her body, head first. Knot the top of the case and support the bottom when holding your cat. Alternately, you can use any type of item your cat likes to nap in—two laundry baskets connected together could also work. These items aren't a trigger for fear like your standard carrier might be.

4 Consider using a synthetic product.

Using a product that contains a feline facial pheromone can help calm cats during stressful events. These products can be sprayed on blankets, towels, or bandanas before you head to the veterinarian. Many cats become less agitated when their owners use these sprays, so purchasing one could make your life easier when it's time to take your cat for a car ride.

Regular wellness exams are crucial for keeping your cat happy and healthy. Use these tips the next time you head to your veterinarian to make it much easier on both you and your cat.

Information courtesy of Dr. Sally J. Foote, Okaw Veterinary Clinic, Tuscola, Ill.

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