

Older Kitties Love It When You Do These Things, Even if They Won't Show It

At age 10, your cat is a senior, and at age 16, she's a full-blown 80-year-old. Yet many owners fail to recognize it because their elusive kitties refuse to leave clues. So when you notice these subtle changes, no matter how slight, please discuss them with your vet.

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- At around age 10, your cat is considered a senior, has likely started to slow down a bit, and may be showing other subtle signs of aging
- A kitty at 16 is comparable to an 80 year-old human. Senior and geriatric cats need regular health monitoring and ongoing adjustments to their environment to enhance comfort and quality of life
- It's important to feed cats at any age a balanced, antioxidant rich, species-appropriate diet that includes omega-3 essential fats and is loaded with moisture
- An aging cat's brain can benefit from a SAME supplement and medium-chain triglycerides (MCTs) like coconut oil
- It's also important to keep your older cat in good physical and mental condition with regular exercise and environmental enrichment

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Just like us, our feline companions face physical and mental challenges as they age. At around 10 years, your kitty is considered a senior and will start to slow down a bit. For instance, she might not jump up on high surfaces as often as she once did, or she might settle for a lower perch on the cat tree.

Kitties of all ages do best with a consistent daily routine, but older cats tend to get extra stressed when presented with anything new or different in their environment.

You might also notice Mr. Whiskers doesn't always run to greet you when you come home as he once did. He may play less and sleep more. Many cats also tend to become more vocal as they age, and more easily startled by strange or loud noises.

In addition, aging cats can suffer from many of the same health problems older humans face, including arthritis, diabetes, thyroid problems, and kidney disease. That's why it's important to bring your pet for twice-yearly wellness visits with your veterinarian.

At veterinary visits, be sure to mention any behavior changes you've noticed in your cat, no matter how minor, as these can provide important clues about health problems that may be brewing under the surface. It's also important to monitor your cat's weight to ensure she isn't becoming too heavy or too thin.

A Cat at 16 Is Comparable to an 80 Year-Old Human

Your senior kitty may also be experiencing some vision and hearing loss, less tolerance for the cold and mental confusion. Cats can and do develop age-related dementia, which means even the smallest change in your kitty's routine can cause stress.

Your senior cat may become a little cranky and easily irritated. If there are young children or a playful dog at home, it's important that all family members approach your kitty in a quiet, non-aggressive manner. It's also important to protect an aging cat from potential bullying by younger or more active pets.

During those twice-yearly veterinary visits mentioned earlier, your vet will perform a **senior wellness checkup**, including a physical exam and blood (including thyroid levels), urine, and stool sample tests. The results will provide a snapshot of how well your cat's organs are functioning, and point to any potential problems.

As a point of reference, a cat at 16 is the approximate equivalent of an 80-year-old human. If your kitty is seeing the vet at least twice a year and between visits you're keeping an eye out for significant or sudden behavior or health changes, you're on the right track.

However, as he ages, try to avoid becoming a "helicopter pet parent" who constantly hovers over kitty. He's still a cat after all, and prefers attention on his own terms!

Do make every effort to keep him comfortable, secure and relaxed by maintaining a consistent daily routine and providing him with a quiet, cozy hideaway with comfy bedding and a favorite toy or two.

How to Provide an Excellent Quality of Life for Your Aging Cat

1. Feed balanced, antioxidant rich, species-appropriate nutrition. Your cat's diet should include omega-3 essential fats, such as krill oil.

Moisture is a cat's best friend, so encourage hydration by offering kitty a variety of water bowls around the house or a drinking fountain, in addition to minimizing or (preferably) eliminating dry food.

If your cat is addicted to a poor-quality processed diet, consider adding a supplement such as Feline Whole Body Support.

2. Keep your pet's body and mind active with regular exercise appropriate for her age and physical condition, and mental stimulation (puzzles and treat-release toys can be beneficial).

Think of creative ways to enrich your cat's indoor environment and if kitty never touches the earth's surface directly (many indoor cats don't), consider a grounding pad.

3. Provide your cat with a SAME (S-adenosylmethionine) supplement as a safe and effective way to stall or improve mental decline, enhance mobility, and assist in liver detoxification.

Periodic detoxification with the herbs milk thistle and dandelion can also be very beneficial, along with super green foods in the form of fresh "cat grass" to nibble on. Chlorophyll, chlorella, or spirulina can also be offered in supplement form to enhance your cat's detoxification processes.

4. If your cat seems disoriented, consider limiting her access to certain parts of the house. Keep doors closed so she can't wander into a closet or any place where she might be unable to get herself out.

Medium-chain triglycerides (MCTs) have been shown to be **safe for cats** and can improve brain energy metabolism and decrease the amyloid protein buildup that results in brain lesions in older pets. Coconut oil is a rich source of MCTs and may also reduce hairball issues.

Give one-fourth teaspoon for every 10 pounds of body weight twice daily for basic MCT support, if your cat will voluntarily eat it.

Some older cats tend to vocalize loudly and often from cognitive decline. Sometimes all a talkative cat needs to quiet down is to hear her owner's voice, so try calling your kitty's name when she starts to vocalize from another room or in the middle of the night.

Calming flower essences, such as Senior Citizen, or homeopathics, such as low potency Belladonna or Aconitum, depending on your cat's specific symptoms, may also reduce yowling. If that doesn't do the trick and the nighttime crying is really a problem for you, consider earplugs.

For aging kitties who are on the prowl all night, consider low dose melatonin, which is not only a sedative with a calming effect, but also an antioxidant. You can also use rhodiola, chamomile, and L-theanine with good results. Night Owl Solution may also help.

You can also try gently waking him up from naps during the day. The more active you can keep him during daylight hours, the more likely he'll be to sleep on your schedule.

5. Set aside time each day to hang out with your cat. Make sure meals are provided on a consistent schedule, along with playtime and petting/lap time. If your cat tolerates being brushed or combed, work that into the daily schedule as well, to help her with grooming chores.
6. If **eliminating outside the litterbox** is an issue, try putting additional boxes around the house. Also insure your cat can get into and out of the box easily. Remember that kitties are very adept at hiding arthritis and other aches and pains, which can limit their ability to climb into high-sided boxes, or boxes kept in bathtubs or up a flight of stairs, for example.

Sources and References

[Pet360 \(Archived\)](#)
