

Weight Loss for Cats

Obesity in pets is a very common problem, affecting as many as 40% of dogs and 30% of cats. Overweight animals experience many of the same health risks overweight humans do, including impairment of head, breathing and digestive functions. It is easy to tell if your pet is overweight. Put your hands on the side of the chest cavity and attempt to feel the ribs. If the ribs can be easily felt, but not seen, the animal is in normal condition. If you have to push hard to feel the ribs, a layer of fat is probably obscuring them.



Animals become obese for the same reasons people do. That is, they take in more calories than they burn. Metabolic diseases (like Hypothyroidism) occasionally result in obesity, but this is extremely uncommon problem in cats. Obesity is almost always due to a combination of too much food and not enough exercise.

Treatment of obesity consists of a combination of diet and exercise. A number of reduced calorie foods are available and may be recommended for different situations. When a change in diet is made, it's important to remember that the animal did not gain the weight in a short period of time, so it's unrealistic to expect it to lose it all in a short period of time. Reduced calorie diets should be gradually introduced into the animal's normal diet over about a week's time. This slow transition makes it easier for the pet to adjust to the new diet without going off food, which can be particularly dangerous for cats.

For many years the standard practice in veterinary medicine for overweight cats was to feed them a food higher in fiber. Because cats do not digest fiber at all, this practice was widely believed to fill them up with empty calories so they could remain full while still eating fewer calories. However, many cats will not lose weight at all (and some gain weight) on these high-fiber, lower-calorie diets.

Recently a new theory has come about, one which utilizes the principles of the Atkins' Diet. And, as in people this new theory has turned the conventional wisdom of weight loss in cats on its head. The Atkins' Diet encourages people to eat high quantities of protein as well as fatty foods and to avoid carbohydrates. The absence of the carbohydrates allows people's blood sugar to decrease (making diabetes more manageable) and also by decreasing the need for insulin, allows for fuller digestion of these fats, and (often) significant weight loss.

Veterinary nutritionists now believe that cats that eat diets with higher amounts of carbohydrates (high fiber foods, or most typical dry cat foods) have higher sugar production in their bodies, which lead to increased need for insulin, and more fat storage as a result. Because cats are true carnivores, they need very little carbohydrates in their body, and by forcing cats to eat higher carbohydrate foods, we are artificially inducing them to gain weight. This is the exact opposite of the conventional wisdom that veterinarians have operated under for years.

The new protocol involves minimizing carbohydrates in your fat cat's diet and feeding them foods high in protein and relatively high in fat. Most dry foods, light foods and senior diets do not fit into this protocol. You have to be extremely strict with this diet, even a tiny amount of food outside the protocol will derail the whole process. People who have failed the Atkins' Diet, often do so because of cheating and eating foods prohibited by the protocol.

This diet is not for all cats, particularly older ones and ones with liver or kidney disease. Cats who are older than 10 years of age should consult with Dr. Spodick prior to trying this new protocol out. Because high protein diets can be detrimental to older cats with kidney or liver problems, we recommend a urinalysis be done to rule out kidney disease. If the urine is abnormal then a full blood panel is recommended before making this change.

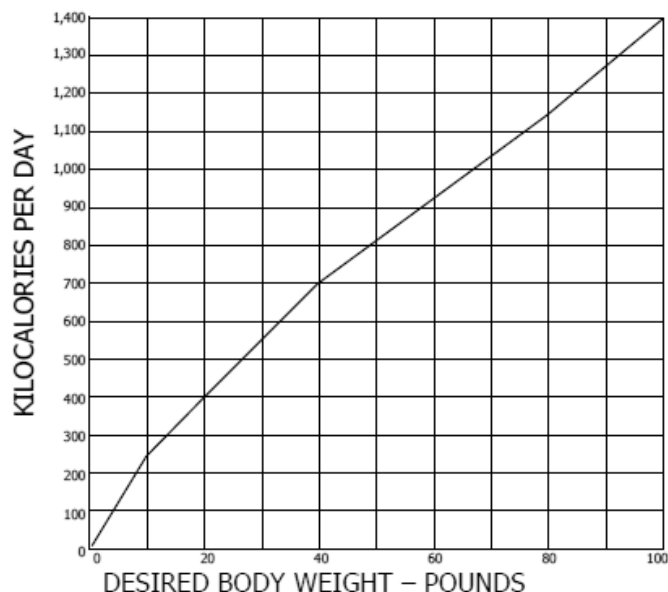
First we will need to decide if a high fiber diet or a high protein diet is best. Usually, the high fiber diet is done first, then a switch to high protein is done if the high fiber diet fails.

Plan for: _____

Current Weight _____ - Desired Weight _____ = To Lose _____

DAILY ENERGY NEEDS FOR WEIGHT LOSS

(90% OF NEED AT DESIRED WEIGHT)



Expected Weight Loss Per week:

Cats 1/4 - 1/2 lb

Calories to Eat Daily:

Ideal weight in lbs x 30 _____

Recommended Food:

CALORIE CONTENT OF DIET FOODS

Eukanuba / Iams

Eukanuba Restricted Calorie	298 Kcal/Cup
Eukanuba Wt Control	331 Kcal/Cup
Iams Weight Control	349 Kcal/Cup
Iams Weight Control 3 Oz cans	102 Kcal/Can

Purina

Proplan Weight Management	413 Kcal/Cup
ONE Healthy Wt Special Care	396 Kcal/Cup
DM Can 5.5 oz**	150 Kcal/Can
DM Dry**	321 Kcal/Cup
OM Can 5.5 oz	150 Kcal/Can
OM Dry	340 Kcal/Cup

Royal Canin

Calorie Control	99 Kcal/Can
Calorie Control Dry	230 Kcal/Cup
Calorie Control Pouch	55 Kcal/pouch

* - High fiber foods ** - Low fiber, High protein foods

Hills

R/D Dry*	263 Kcal/Cup
R/D Canned 5.5 Oz*	116 Kcal/Can
W/D Dry*	281 Kcal/Cup
W/D Canned 5.5 Oz*	146 Kcal/Can
M/D Dry**	480 Kcal/Cup
M/D Canned 5.5 Oz**	156 Kcal/Can
Science Diet Lite Dry*	316 Kcal/Cup
Science Diet Lite* 5.5 Oz	125 Kcal/Can

Tender Vittles

Lite Pouch	110 Kcal/Pouch
------------	----------------