

Cats, Vets and You!

Okay, how many of you don't bring your cat to the veterinary office because it stresses him/her out? Let's see your hands. Now, how many of you don't bring your cat to the veterinary office because it stresses YOU out? Aha! It is a known fact that although there are more cats in the United States than dogs, cats are seen by a veterinarian only half as often as dogs. Also, cats really like to hide their pain or illness, it's a defense mechanism, but they require preventative and medical care too. Often, ailments are found because of a thorough physical exam rather than what is seen at home. We at Brooklyn Park Pet Hospital are engaging in new techniques and protocols to improve your feline's visit to our hospital and a large part of improving our strategy relies on what is first done by *you* at home.

Here are some principles to keep in mind:

1. Cats like what is familiar to them: carriers, car rides, vet visits, and certain procedures (toenail trims) or handling at home, if done frequently, leads to less stress, and we could you a little less of that in our lives.
2. Stay calm! Cats definitely sense our stress and if you are stressed at home, your cat will also become stressed.
3. Cats learn through positive reinforcement – don't force your cat into the carrier, don't punish, and make sure to give rewards for the positive behaviors

Tips for travel *before* you leave:

1. Start early! At 2-7 weeks of age in a cat, events may have long term effects on development. It is very important that experiences are positive and that wanted behaviors are rewarded and reinforced.
2. Best type of carrier:
 - Can be taken apart in the middle
 - Loads from the front AND the top
 - Hard-sided to allow for seat belt use in car
3. Leave the carrier in a room that your cat spends the most time in. Add soft bedding and provide treats, catnip or toys in the carrier. Also, bring these things to the vet.
4. Never force your cat in the carrier – if there is no time to train then place your cat calmly in a small room *then* bring in the carrier and place through the top opening.
5. Use a calming feline synthetic pheromone like Feliway® or Comfort Zone™ and spray in carrier 30 minutes prior to travel.
6. Do not give food or water for a minimum of 3-6 hours prior to a car ride.
7. Cover the carrier with a towel.
8. Keep the carrier covered when you enter the clinic.
9. Stay calm

By making a few simple adjustments to the travel preparations for your cat, you can minimize anxiety associated with a veterinary visit. We, in turn, will do our part to continue that calm and caring approach to minimize fear in your pet. If you would like more "friendly- feline handling" information, check out these videos from the Catalyst Council at

www.catalystcouncil.org/resources/video/.