



Bottle Feeding Kittens

1. GET A BOTTLE AND NIPPLE

You can purchase a bottle at any pet supply store or feed store, or online. Be aware that the nipple that comes on the bottle is not cut; you will need to cut a hole in it yourself. The hole should be big enough that if you hold it upside down, formula can slowly drop out of it -- but not so big that it flows out freely.

Preferred nipples for kittens, available by PetAg, Pet Nurser, and Miracle Nipple.



2. ASSESS THE KITTEN

Before you feed a kitten, always make sure you've assessed him/her to make sure it is safe to feed. If a kitten is overheated or too cold, it is not safe to feed until you have gently stabilized their temperature. If a kitten is not able to swallow, it is not safe to feed. If a kitten has a cleft palate, it may be riskier to feed. Be sure that you've assessed the kitten's temperature and body condition before feeding.

Ensure that the kitten is able to swallow by placing a drop of formula on their tongue and feeling the throat with one finger. If the kitten appears stable and is swallowing, proceed.

3. PREPARE YOUR BOTTLE

You're going to need to purchase kitten formula -- you cannot feed kittens the milk that is in your fridge. Never feed a kitten cow's milk or other dairy products, dairy alternatives, or human baby formula, as this can be dangerous or even fatal to the kitten. Instead, purchase a kitten formula from a pet supply store, feed store, or online. Once opened, keep the formula refrigerated. Prepare the formula according to the manufacturer's instructions, making sure that it is fresh, clump free, and comfortably warm.

4. FEED THE KITTEN

Lay the kitten in a natural, belly-down position -- never, ever on her back. Hold the kitten's head stable with your non-dominant hand. Gently slide the nipple into the kitten's mouth and invert the bottle to start the flow of formula. The kitten should roll his/her tongue into a U-shape and begin to swallow. Follow the feeding chart for a guideline of amount and frequency.

Be very careful not to squeeze formula into the kitten's mouth as this can cause aspiration. If you are feeding a very young kitten and having a difficult time controlling the flow, consider syringe feeding (instructions are given further down in this handout).

If the kitten latches, that's great, but it's okay if it takes a while for him/her to get the hang of things! Bottle feeding is an art form that improves with time, so be patient and don't give up. If the kitten is having difficulty, try these tips:

- Be sure you're holding the head and body stable to guide him/her. Kittens don't necessarily understand what you're trying to do, so it's up to you to hold them steady and show them.
- Take a look at your bottle and nipple, and make sure there are no issues such as a nipple that is cut too big or too small, or clumps in the formula that may be causing a blockage.
- Wrap the kitten in a small baby blanket if need be to help him/her feel focused and swaddled; just make sure he/she is still in a proper belly-down position.
- Rubbing the face with a cloth or toothbrush can simulate a mother's tongue and help them feel prepared to eat.

kitten weight and feeding chart

AGE	WEIGHT	AMOUNT PER FEEDING	SCHEDULE
0-1 week	50-150 grams	2-6 ml	Every 2 hours
1-2 weeks	150-250 grams	6-10 ml	Every 2-3 hours
2-3 weeks	250-350 grams	10-14 ml	Every 3-4 hours
3-4 weeks	350-450 grams	14-18 ml	Every 4-5 hours
4-5 weeks	450-550 grams	18-22 ml	Every 5-6 hours
5-8 weeks	550-850 grams	(weaning; offer ample wet food)	Every 6 hours

Follow this guideline to determine the proper amount and frequency of feeding. Remember that every kitten is different, and this is a guideline--not a rule book! Kittens do not need any extra water (other than what is in their milk) during this time.

5. COMPLETE THE ROUTINE

After feeding, always ensure that you're cleaning the face by wiping away any formula with a warm, wet cloth or baby wipe. Formula left behind can cause the kitten to get a crusty face or moist dermatitis that causes the fur to fall out, so keep them clean.

Once the kitten is cleaned up, make sure he/she has been stimulated to pee and poop, and is placed back in her warm, safe spot.

Bottle Feeding Video: <http://www.kittenlady.org/bottlefeeding>

Citation: "Bottle Feeding." *Kitten Lady*, www.kittenlady.org/bottlefeeding.



Syringe Feeding Kittens

A syringe can be greatly beneficial for kittens 0-2 weeks of age. Syringes make it easier to measure in small increments, so you can feel confident that the kitten has eaten a full meal. However, it does come with some risks, as very young kittens don't have a gag reflex and can easily aspirate if fed too quickly. Here's what you need to know if you're going to syringe feed a kitten:

1. PICK THE RIGHT SUPPLIES

For small babies, I recommend a 3cc oral syringe (with no needle, of course!) You can find these online for less than ten cents apiece

Ideally, you will use the 3cc syringe in combination with a Miracle Nipple. The Miracle Nipple is a very helpful tool that fits on a bottle or on a syringe. The nipple comes in both small and large sizes, and is perfect for helping tiny kittens get a good latch. If no Miracle Nipple is available, it may be challenging to get a kitten to latch, and you may want to opt for a standard bottle.

You will also need to purchase kitten formula. Do not attempt to feed a kitten cow's milk or other dairy products, dairy alternatives, or human baby formula, as this can be dangerous or fatal for the kitten. Kitten formula can be purchased at most pet supply stores, or can be found in rural areas at feed stores. You can also buy it online.

Tip: Be sure to pick up at least a dozen syringes, as you don't want to use them over and over again, even if you're sanitizing them. Used syringes can operate less smoothly, making it harder and more dangerous to feed the kitten.



2. ASSESS THE KITTEN

Before you feed a kitten, always make sure you've assessed her to make sure it is safe to feed. If a kitten is overheated or too cold, it is not safe to feed until you have gently stabilized their temperature. If a kitten is not able to swallow, it is not safe to feed. If a kitten has a cleft palate, it may be riskier to feed. Be sure that you've assessed the kitten's temperature and body condition before feeding.

Ensure that the kitten is able to swallow by placing a drop of formula on their tongue and feeling the throat with one finger. If the kitten appears stable and is swallowing, proceed.

3. FEED THE KITTEN

Prepare the formula according to the manufacturer's instructions, making sure that it is fresh, clump free, and comfortably warm. Pull the formula into the syringe. Lay the kitten in a natural, belly-down position -- never, ever on her back. Gently slide the syringe into the kitten's mouth and slowly drip formula onto the tongue. The kitten should begin to swallow. Very slowly continue to drip formula into the mouth. If the kitten latches on and is suckling, that's great! Just make sure that he/she isn't eating too quickly; help the kitten keep a slow and steady flow.

Tip: Exercise extreme caution while syringe feeding--feed as slowly as possible to avoid aspiration.

kitten weight and feeding chart

AGE	WEIGHT	AMOUNT PER FEEDING	SCHEDULE
0-2 week	50-150 grams	2-6 ml	Every 2 hours
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2-3 weeks	250-350 grams	10-14 ml	Every 3-4 hours
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4-5 weeks	450-550 grams	18-22 ml	Every 5-6 hours
5-8 weeks	550-850 grams	(weaning; offer ample wet food)	Every 6 hours

Use this chart as a guideline for feeding. Remember that every kitten is different, and this is only a guideline--not a rule book! Kittens do not need any extra water (other than what is in their milk) during this time.

Syringe Feeding Video: <http://www.kittenlady.org/syringefeeding>

Citation: "Syringe Feeding." *Kitten Lady*, www.kittenlady.org/syringefeeding.



Weaning Kittens

Weaning is the fun, messy adventure of helping a kitten transition from nursing (or bottle feeding) to eating solid food on his/her own! Kittens often need extra support during this time to help ensure they're receiving the proper nutrients in proper quantity, and to keep them on track for success and independence. **Please note that water should not be given to the kittens until they are no longer eating a slurry or being fed a bottle. Water is for once they are eating wet food only.**

Here's what you need to know about weaning:

1. START AT THE RIGHT AGE

Kittens' bodies are very sensitive to premature weaning, so be careful about starting them too young. A kitten 0-5 weeks old should be nursing or bottle feeding. Around 5 weeks of age, the kitten's premolars will begin to emerge, indicating that he/she is likely ready to start trying out some meaty foods. However, some kittens may need a bit more time on the bottle due to health issues, or differences in weight or size. Use your best judgement and follow the kitten's lead to determine the appropriate age to wean. If you see any changes in the kitten's health or energy during this process, immediately step back to bottle feeding.

2. GET THE RIGHT SUPPLIES

Pick up some wet kitten food, making sure that it says "kitten." Kitten food is higher in calories, fat and protein that the kitten needs to help grow big and strong. Wet food is the healthiest choice for kittens, as the moisture content will help them stay healthy and hydrated. You'll also want to pick up some shallow food dishes so the kitten can easily access the food.

3. START WITH SLURRY

Slurry is a mix of formula and wet food, which is used to help transition the kitten from one food to the other. You may begin by just introducing a small teaspoon of wet food mixed with the formula, which allows the kitten to acclimate to the new proteins and flavors. As the kitten becomes more comfortable eating meat, you'll begin increasing the ratio so that there is more wet food present at each feeding.

Every kitten is different, so use your judgment to determine the best way to introduce this new food to the kitten. Some kittens benefit from having the wet food blended with formula in a smoothie shaker, and then fed to them in a bottle so that they can discover wet food in a format they can understand. Other kittens may be able to eat successfully from a tongue depressor, or from your finger. Eventually, the kitten will slowly learn how to lap the slurry from a dish.

Tip: Be mindful to always supplement with bottle feeding throughout this process! If you're not sure that a kitten is getting a full meal with the slurry, complete the feeding by giving him/her a bottle. There's no such thing as "tough love" for kittens, and if he/she isn't understanding how to eat yet, you'll still need to supplement to make sure he/she's staying healthy and well fed.

4. TRANSITION TO WET FOOD AND INTRODUCE WATER

Once the kitten is confidently eating slurry on his/her own, it's time to switch completely to wet food. Be sure you're feeding a high quality wet food formulated for kittens, and monitor to ensure that there are no concerning changes in weight, behavior, or condition.

At this time, it's also appropriate to introduce water in a small, shallow dish. Never provide a large dish that can cause a safety hazard to a tiny kitten; keep your water dish to about 2 inches high. It's normal for kittens to struggle with water at first, but he/she should be drinking confidently within 1-3 days of introduction.

Kitten Weaning Video: <http://www.kittenlady.org/weaning>

Citation: "Weaning." *Kitten Lady*, www.kittenlady.org/weaning.