



Kitten Development

Newborn:

- **Physical development:** Newborn kittens will have their eyes closed and their ears folded. They will have no teeth, and their gums, nose, and paws may appear bright pink in color. They do not yet have a gag reflex or the ability to thermoregulate. The umbilical cord will be attached and will fall off on its own around 4 to 5 days of age. Claws will be non-retractable. At this age, they cannot hear or see; they can only navigate the world around them through scent and through seeking warmth and comfort.
- **Behavioral development:** Newborns will sleep for the majority of the day. Newborns cannot defend themselves or walk, but may be able to move around by crawling.
- **Average temperature:** 95-97 degrees Fahrenheit at birth. It is critical to provide a gentle heat source to keep the kitten warm and stable. The kitten's environment should be kept between 85-90 degrees at this time.
- **Average weight:** 1.8-5.3 ounces (50-150 grams)
- **Care information:** Newborn kittens belong with their mother full-time, as mothers will provide them with food, cleaning, warmth, and bathroom support. If no mother is present, they must be fed with a bottle and kitten formula every two hours by a knowledgeable caregiver, stimulated to go to the bathroom, and kept at an appropriate temperature

1 week old:

- **Physical development:** One-week-old kittens will have eyes closed, but no umbilical cord. They will still have no teeth. Claws will still be non-retractable. Around 7 days, the ear canals will slowly begin to open and the ears will slightly unfold. Between 8 to 12 days, the eyes will slowly begin to open, which can occur over the course of several days. One eye may open more quickly than the other; it's important to let the kitten's eyes open at their own pace. All kittens will be born with blue eyes, which will transition to an adult eye color with age.
- **Behavioral development:** One-week-old kittens, though larger than newborns, will still be mostly uncoordinated and will similarly sleep for the majority of the day. At this age, they should be able to hold their head up, move by wiggling their limbs, and be active and vocal if handled.
- **Average temperature:** 97-98 degrees F. It is critical to provide a gentle heat source to keep the kitten warm and stable. The kitten's environment should be kept around 80 degrees at this time.
- **Average weight:** 5.3-8.8 ounces (150-250 grams). By 1 week of age, the kitten should have roughly doubled their birth weight.
- **Care information:** One-week-old kittens belong with their mother full-time. If no mother is present, they must be fed with a bottle and kitten formula every two to three hours by a knowledgeable caregiver, stimulated to go to the bathroom, and kept an appropriate temperature.

2 weeks old:

- **Physical development:** At 2 weeks of age, kittens' eyes will be fully open and baby blue. Their vision will be poor and they will not be able to see at long distances. The ear canals will be open and the ears

will be small and rounded. If you open the kitten's mouth, you will find that there are still no teeth. Claws will still be non-retractable.

- **Behavioral development:** Two-week-old kittens will be becoming more coordinated, and will be beginning to attempt their first steps. They will be wobbly on their feet and uncoordinated. Kittens at this age may exhibit some curiosity about the world around them, will not yet be playing, and will spend the majority of their time sleeping.
- **Average temperature:** 98-99 degrees F. It is critical to provide a gentle heat source to keep the kitten warm and stable. The kitten's environment should be kept around 80 degrees at this time.
- **Average weight:** 8.8-12.3 ounces (250-350 grams)
- **Care information:** Two-week-old kittens belong with their mother full-time. If no mother is present, they must be fed with a bottle and kitten formula every three to four hours by a knowledgeable caregiver, stimulated to go to the bathroom, and kept at an appropriate temperature.

3 weeks old:

- **Physical development:** At 3 weeks of age, kittens will have blue eyes and small ears that are beginning to point upward, like a miniature cat. The kitten's vision and hearing will be slowly improving. At this age, a kitten's first teeth will begin to emerge. The tiny teeth at the front of the mouth, called the incisors, will start to come through the gums. Kittens will slowly begin retracting their claws.
- **Behavioral development:** At this age, kittens will be walking, exploring their surroundings, and even beginning to explore the litter box. They may begin to become curious about cat toys, though they are not yet able to run or chase after moving objects. They will sleep frequently and may begin some small self-grooming behaviors. During this week, their coordination will be improving rapidly.
- **Average temperature:** 99-100 degrees F. Three-week-old kittens still require a heat source, but will be more active and may stray from it when not sleeping. The kitten's environment should be around 75 degrees at this time.
- **Average weight:** 12.3-15.9 ounces (350-450 grams)
- **Care information:** Three-week-old kittens belong with their mother full-time. If no mother is present, they must be fed with a bottle and kitten formula every four to five hours by a knowledgeable caregiver. Introduce a shallow cat litter box with a non-clumping litter.

4 weeks old:

- **Physical development:** At 4 weeks of age, kittens will have much improved vision and hearing. The kitten's teeth will continue to develop. The long teeth next to the incisors, called the canine teeth, will start to come through the gums. Claws will be retractable.
- **Behavioral development:** Four-week-old kittens will be confidently exploring and developing more coordination that allows them to walk, run, and even begin to play. With their improved senses, they will be notably more responsive, making frequent eye contact with caregivers, and reacting to sights and sounds in the environment. Their grooming skills may still be limited but improving. They should be using a litter box.
- **Average temperature:** 99-101 degrees F. Continue providing a heat source for 4-week-old kittens, although they will likely use it only when resting. The kitten's environment should stay comfortably warm and never colder than 70-75 degrees.
- **Average weight:** 15.9 ounces-1.2 pounds (450-550 grams)
- **Care information:** Four-week-old kittens belong with their mother full-time. Orphans of this age should be bottle fed every five hours. Four-week-old kittens will generally be using the litter box, and can begin to be introduced to toys.

5 weeks old:

- **Physical development:** At 5 weeks of age, a kitten's teeth will continue to develop. The premolars will start to emerge. Eyes will be blue and ears will be growing and pointed. Claws will be retractable.

- **Behavioral development:** Five-week-old kittens will be running and playing confidently. They will be developing social skills with humans and other animals. Their grooming skills will be improving. They should have perfected the use of the litter box by this age.
- **Average temperature:** 100-101 degrees F. At this age, a heating source is no longer required as long as the environment is a comfortable temperature of 70-75 degrees.
- **Average weight:** 1.2-1.4 pounds (550-650 grams)
- **Care information:** Five-week-old kittens, if healthy, may begin the weaning process. Kittens should receive ample "slurry" or kitten wet food, in addition to access to their mother's milk or, if orphaned, a bottle. No water should be given. Always provide supplemental feeding and ensure that the kitten is maintaining a healthy weight and body condition during weaning. Provide a shallow litter box at all times.

6 weeks old:

- **Physical development:** At 6 weeks of age, a kitten's teeth will begin to reach their final stage of early development. The molars will start to emerge. The eyes will still be blue, and vision and hearing will be fully developed.
- **Behavioral development:** Six-week-old kittens will be socializing confidently with peers, play-fighting, pouncing, and defending themselves. They will be curious about their surroundings and eager to explore. They will be perfecting their grooming skills. Six-week-old kittens are becoming coordinated enough to jump off of furniture and land on their feet.
- **Average temperature:** 100-101 degrees F. At this age, a heating source is no longer required as long as the environment is a comfortable temperature of 70-75 degrees.
- **Average weight:** 1.4-1.7 pounds (650-750 grams)
- **Care information:** Kittens should receive ample kitten wet food if weaned. Provide access to water (only if weaned), food, and a shallow litter box at all times. At six weeks, kittens should receive their first FVRCP vaccine to protect them against viruses (rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, and panleukopenia).

7 weeks old

- **Physical development:** All baby teeth will be present at 7 weeks of age. At this age, the kitten's eye color will be changing, and the adult eye color will begin to emerge. Male kittens' testicles will begin to descend around 7 weeks.
- **Behavioral development:** Seven-week-old kittens will experience a spike in energy. Sleep will decrease, and time spent playing will increase. At this age, kittens are able to run, climb cat trees, and confidently jump off of furniture.
- **Average temperature:** 100-101 degrees F. At this age, a heating source is no longer required as long as the environment is a comfortable temperature of 70-75 degrees.
- **Average weight:** 1.7-1.9 pounds (750-850 grams)
- **Care information:** Kittens should receive ample kitten wet food, and may have kitten dry food as a supplement. Provide access to water, food, and a shallow litter box at all times.

8 weeks old:

- **Physical development:** All baby teeth will be present at 8 weeks of age. The eyes will be completely transitioned to their adult color of green, yellow, brown, or blue. The ears will be proportionate.
- **Behavioral development:** Eight-week-old kittens will be energetic and independent. Their agility and coordination will be nearly fully developed.
- **Average temperature:** 100-101 degrees F. At this age, a heating source is no longer required as long as the environment is a comfortable temperature of 70-75 degrees.
- **Average weight:** 1.9-2.1 pounds (850-950 grams)
- **Care information:** Kittens should receive access to canned and dry kitten food three to four times per day, and can receive the bulk of their calories from dry food if they choose. Provide access to water and a shallow litter box at all times. If two weeks have passed since their first FVRCP vaccine, kittens may receive a booster at this time.

Shaw, Hannah. "PetMD." *PetMD*,

www.petmd.com/cat/care/kitten-development-understanding-kittens-major-growth-milestones.