



Kitten Foster Guide Birth-8 Weeks

Thank you so much for fostering with Houston Pets Alive! Foster families are the backbone of our life-saving work— we truly appreciate you!

_____ litter. Age: _____

You have the

Name & ID#

They are eating _____.

They must be fed every _____ hours / _____ hours overnight.

They need to be weighed at each feeding.

They need to be weighed _____ x / day.

They have been consistently eating on their own. YES / NO

Elimination: Stimulation -or- Litterbox

Please use your foster kitten(s)'s official HPA! ID numbers in all official correspondence with HPA staff, volunteers, or the public/potential adopters. You are welcome to use any name you like at home, but our teams will not be able to reference paperwork or process adoptions without the name in our records.

About this packet:

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS

Neonatal: neonatalshoustonpetsalive.org

Sick Pets: sickmedicalshoustonpetsalive.org

Vaccines/Spay/Neuter/Wellness: RoutineMedical@HoustonPetsAlive.org

Behavioral: behaviorshoustonpetsalive.org

Cattery Placement: PetStoreCats@HoustonPetsAlive.org

Interested Adopter/Adoption Process: Adopt@HoustonPetsAlive.org

Not sure where your question should go? CatFoster@HoustonPetsAlive.org

Neonatal Foster Program — Overview

Fostering is a commitment. If you cannot put aside a few hours of EVERY day to feed and care for kittens, this gig is not for you! Kittens may get sick; they will take a long time to feed; they will be messy – this is what kittens do. Fostering kittens is not all fun — it's life-saving work.

The #1 thing to remember when fostering kittens is: WEIGH, WEIGH, WEIGH!!

The overwhelming majority of kittens who pass away in foster care do so because they were not weighed as frequently as they should have been! Weighing kittens tracks their growth and alerts us to issues before it is too late!

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU GET YOUR KITTENS HOME:

- Get your kittens settled into their **habitat**. Make sure they have a **heat source!**
- Be sure to kitten-proof their area, and watch out for any **common household hazards**.
- Feed and care** for your kittens as instructed, referring back to the Feeding/Care Guide.

- ❑ **Record** their weights and make notes about progress on the Daily Care Sheet.
- ❑ Spend time **playing** with your kittens and **socializing** them, if they're old enough!
- ❑ Give kittens plenty of time to **rest**. They will sleep much of the day—this is normal.

WHO DO I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

Each foster family is assigned to a **Foster Mentor**. Your Foster Mentor is your springboard, your midwife/nurse, and your kitten therapist, all combined! Look out for their first email to you, as it will include info on scheduling appointments, links to all the important forms you'll need, and info on the entire fostering process. You'll receive this email within 24-48 hours after you receive your kittens.

NON-URGENT MEDICAL: If your kittens start to show **any** signs of mild-moderate illness – *sneezing, vomiting, mild-moderate diarrhea, not eating, runny nose, goopy eyes, hair loss, going outside litterbox, moderate weight loss (10 grams or less), fleas, etc* – **contact the medical team via email at Sickmedical@houstonpetsalive.org and CC neonatal@houstonpetsalive.org**

Be sure to include: your kittens' ID#s, current weights, and a description of their symptoms. Use a descriptive subject! (ex: "Beatrix A12345678 has diarrhea", or "C15 kittens have fleas")

!!! FOR MEDICAL EMERGENCIES CALL ANYTIME DAY OR NIGHT **!!!**
281-215-5146

IMPORTANT: If you suspect that your kitten is fading, please implement fading kitten protocol (described below) and **THEN** call the emergency line. Time is of the essence to pull your kitten out of the fade— **only call after your kitten has been wrapped in a heat source and started on sugar syrup.**

For kittens, a medical emergency includes head slumped/ body limp/ unable to rouse (**Fading Kitten Syndrome**), **diarrhea** that is very liquidy, white, bloody, or black, any **rapid weight loss, mouth breathing, heavy/labored breathing, red/brown urine, vomiting and diarrhea** together or within a short timeframe, **seizures**. Any injuries sustained while in foster care also warrant a call to the medical hotline!

WELLNESS / VACCINES

- Kittens need de-wormer given at **2-weeks, 4-weeks and 6-weeks** old. When your kittens reach this/these ages, please schedule a time to stop by the Cattery on 8710 Stella Link Road to pick up dewormer during open hours 12 pm to 6 pm. **Make sure you know your kittens' HPA! names and ID#s.** You will administer these oral meds at home— do not bring healthy kittens to the shelter!

- At **6-weeks AND 1.5 LBS**, your kittens will need to *come into the clinic* for their first kitten vaccines. Book wellness appointments by signing up to attend one of Foster Fests, held most Sundays. Every Monday, a new sign up will be posted on our HPA! Foster Network page on Facebook for the following Sunday. You can also sign-up by emailing RoutineMedical@HoustonPetsAlive.org
- At **8-weeks** kittens will need to come back to clinic for their, **microchip, 2nd second set of vaccines, dewormer and combo testing**. **Again, you can email Routinemedical@houstonpetsalive.org to make an appt at one of our Foster Fests.**

SPAY / NEUTER SURGERY

Kittens cannot come in for their **spay/neuter surgery** until they weigh **at least 2lbs (906g) and are at least 8 weeks old**. Kittens who have their mama *generally* reach 2 pounds around 8 weeks old, but, for orphans, it can be as late as 10-12 weeks! Kittens must be clear of any symptoms of illness (excluding ringworm) to come in for surgery!

- Email routinemedical@houstonpetsalive.org to book your appointment(s) well in advance, especially during peak kitten season!
- You can also sign up for a surgery appointment during Foster Fest.

MARKETING / GETTING YOUR KITTENS ADOPTED!

When your kittens reach **6 weeks**, their adoption profiles go up on the HPA! website and they'll be eligible for pre-adoption. **It is your responsibility, as their foster, to market your kittens through HPA!**

- **Submit photos and bios** for your kittens to bios@houstonpetsalive.org and [CC PetStoreCats@houstonpetsalive.org](mailto:CCPetStoreCats@houstonpetsalive.org)

ADOPTION!

During “kitten season” (March-September), there is a large supply of kittens and it can take a few weeks (after your fosters have been altered) for kittens to find their forever homes.

If your kittens are not adopted or pre-adopted directly from your home, they will go to one of our fantastic pet store catteries where potential adopters can meet them! Kittens receive lots of loving care and attention at our pet store catteries, and have the best chance at finding their forever family!

We require that you notify our cattery teams when your kittens reach 8 weeks old and have had two rounds of vaccinations. Please email PetStoreCats@houstonpetsalive.org and [CC CatFoster@HoustonPetsAlive.org](mailto:CatFoster@HoustonPetsAlive.org). This will ensure that your kittens join the waitlist for the next available spots in one of our many catteries in the case that they are not adopted while in your care!

Until they are cleared to enter the adoption center, the following are your responsibilities as their foster parent:

- Our adoption team will forward you all adoption inquiries that they've received through our website about your kittens. Please answer these emails promptly, in the order in which they're received.
- You will be responsible for setting up meet and greets with potential adopters! You can do these at your home, or at our Cattery..
- Be on the lookout for emails about adoption events. These are generally held on weekends at pet stores such as Petco or Petsmart. Many fosters who stay to promote their kittens, as opposed to just dropping them off, have great success at these events!

Please ask your Foster Mentor if you have any questions about the adoption process!

GRADUATION

When your kittens turn 8-weeks old, regardless of whether they are ready for **their** spay/neuter surgery, they will graduate into the Cat Program.

You will receive a welcome email from the Cat Foster Team, CatFoster@houstonpetsalive.org

*****If you are not taking home a mama cat, please skip the following section.*****

MAMA CAT: Mom will stay in the Neonatal Program until she's spayed. The sooner her kittens are no longer nursing, the sooner she can be spayed; **she must not be allowed to let her kittens nurse for 2 weeks before her spay.** Her milk must dry up before surgery because the mammary glands are located so close to the incision site. You have a couple of options for dealing with this:

- You can separate mama from her kittens when you see that the kittens are eating enough gruel/kibble to maintain (and gain!) their weights (generally around 7-8 weeks). This ensures that mama is able to come in for her spay appointment around the same time that her kittens are being spayed/neutered. If you are in a hurry to get mama into the adoption center so you can foster more kittens, this is the best choice.
- A lot of fosters find it very difficult/heartbreaking to separate mama from her kittens. If you're one of these fosters, do not despair! Allowing mom to nurse her kittens well after they require it is not going to cause any harm. Just keep in mind that the longer you allow

mama to nurse, the longer you'll have to wait until she's able to be spayed. If you're in no rush to get rid of mama cat, this is the best option.

Getting mama ready for adoption:

- Schedule a spay appointment by emailing routinemedical@houstonpetsalive.org for at least **2 weeks after separation** from kittens.
- Sign her up for a spot in one of our cattery adoption locations by emailing dunvalecattery@houstonpetsalive.org She'll need a few days in foster to recover from her spay before moving into a cattery. Cattery spots are limited for adult cats, so sign up promptly to get your mama on the waitlist!
- Don't forget to submit photos and bio by emailing bios@houstonpetsalive.org and CC dunvalecattery@houstonpetsalive.org, so that she can find her forever home as well.

KITTEN MILESTONES:

| 2 weeks old | 4 weeks old |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Due for 1st de-wormer | <input type="checkbox"/> Due for 2nd de-wormer <input type="checkbox"/> Kittens <i>should</i> be ready to wean onto gruel |
| 6 weeks old | 8 weeks old |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Due for wellness check with 1st FVRCP vaccine and 3rd de-wormer <input type="checkbox"/> Photos and bios due <input type="checkbox"/> Available for pre-adoption on our website <input type="checkbox"/> Kittens should be eating independently <input type="checkbox"/> Request a spot for your kittens in the pet stores | <input type="checkbox"/> GRADUATION! Kitten moves from Neonatal Program to Cat Program <input type="checkbox"/> Due for wellness check with 2nd FVRCP <input type="checkbox"/> Eligible for S/N surgery when 2lbs & healthy <input type="checkbox"/> Eligible for entrance to Pet Stores: ONLY IF 2+ VACCINES HAVE BEEN ADMINISTERED AND ALTERED!! |
| 10 weeks old | 12 weeks old |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Due for wellness check with 3rd FVRCP booster | <input type="checkbox"/> Due for wellness check with 4th (final) FVRCP booster and rabies vaccine |

PROGRAM CONTACTS

- Amber Lozano, Neonatal Foster Manager, Neonatal@HoustonPetsAlive.org
- Amber Lozano, Cat Foster Manager: catfoster@houstonpetsalive.org
- Kimberly May, Foster Medical Manager, SickMedical@HoustonPetsAlive.org
- Routine Medical Scheduling team, RoutineMedical@HoustonPetsAlive.org
- Samantha Miller, Cattery Coordinator, PetStoreCats@HoustonPetsAlive.org

***NOTE: FOSTERS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO RETURN KITTENS TO THE HPA! SHELTER ***

- Kittens have extremely weak immune systems, especially newborns. There are too many illnesses floating around the cat shelter that can get kittens sick.
- We are happy to find a babysitter for you if give us advance notice — at least 24 hours. But we make no promises that a babysitter can be found without more advanced notice. So please have a back-up plan.

Supplies Needed

Bottle Babies: REQUIRED Supplies

- [Bottle kit](#) with nipples
- [Powdered KMR formula](#)
- [Electric heating pad](#) that **does not** shut off automatically
- Secure pet carrier for transportation
- [Digital scale](#) (food or postal) that weighs in grams
- Non-alcoholic baby wipes

Bottle Babies: *Optional* Supplies

- [Pedialyte](#) (unflavored)

Gruel/Syringe Gruel Babies: REQUIRED Supplies

- Electric heating pad that **does not** shut off automatically
- High quality [canned kitten food](#)
- Hard kitten food (kibble) — [Royal Canin Mother & Babycat](#) (recommended)
- Secure pet carrier for transportation)
- Empty room/bathroom to isolate kittens
- Digital scale (food or postal) that weighs in grams
- Shallow litter box & non-clumping litter
- Blender or food processor (**syringe gruel only**)

Gruel/Syringe Gruel Babies: *Optional* Supplies

- [Human baby food](#) (chicken or turkey w/ no onions, garlic, or spices)
- [NutriCal](#) — nutritional supplement for weight gain

Pregnant/Nursing Mom: REQUIRED Supplies

- High quality canned kitten food for mom and to wean babies

- ❑ Hard kitten food for mom and to wean babies — Royal Canin Mother & Babycat
- ❑ Bottle kit with nipples in case kittens need supplementary feeding
- ❑ Powdered KMR formula in case kittens need supplementary feeding
- ❑ Electric heating pad that **does not** shut off automatically
- ❑ Empty room/bathroom to isolate mom and kittens
- ❑ Digital scale (food or postal) that weighs in grams
- ❑ Litter box & non-clumping litter
- ❑ Secure pet carrier for transportation (cardboard carrier can be purchased from APA for \$5)

Caring for Neonatal Kittens

***** The two most important rules of Kitten Club: Kittens must be **WARM** and have **FULL BELLIES** at all times! *****

The Basics

- Kittens must be kept in a safe and secure spot, and isolated from other pets (to prevent illness) for 7-10 days.
- Kittens must have access to a **heating pad (on low setting) at all times.**
- Do not give kittens baths unless absolutely necessary. If kittens get wet, they must be blow-dried until they are completely dry. Young kittens can very easily become hypothermic. As an alternative, use a hypoallergenic baby wipe to clean dirty kittens.
- You are required to keep track of kittens' weights, bowel movements, medications, and other health issues on your Daily Care Sheets.
- For any questions or concerns about your kittens' weights or general development, please contact your Foster Mentor.

Kitten Developmental Milestones

- **BIRTH:** Kittens typically weigh about 90-110 grams at birth; they should gain about 100g/week.
- **7-10 DAYS:** Eyes open(eyes will be blue until kittens are 6-7 weeks old).
- **2 WEEKS:** They will start crawling around (can inch around as early as 4 days); 1st dewormer
- **3-4 WEEKS:** They'll start to play with each other. The ears will start to stand up, and teeth will begin to come in.
- **3.5-5 WEEKS:** It's time to start the weaning process – kittens should be well on their way to eating independently and using the litter box. 2nd dewormer.
- **6 WEEKS:** They should get their first vaccinations from HPA!, and go up on our website for pre-adoption. 3rd dewormer.
- **8-12 WEEKS:** and/or whenever kittens have reached 2lbs (906g), they can be spayed or neutered, and then go to their forever homes!

Setting up a Habitat

For Bottle Babies: Any medium sized bin, tub, crate, or carrier that measures around 20"x15"x15" (the size of a regular cat carrier) makes a great habitat for un-weaned kittens. Something that's easy to clean is usually best (like a Rubbermaid storage bin). Place the heating pad (set on low) flat on one side of the containment area, and make sure that there is room for kittens to move off the heating pad if they get too warm. Cover the bottom of the containment area with a blanket or towel. Feel free to place stuffed toys and plenty of soft fleecy things in the habitat for the kittens to snuggle with.

For Syringe Gruel & Gruel Babies: Once kittens are able to crawl out of their bin or ready to use a litter box, you can move them to a bigger space. Bathtubs are often great for this stage. Keep the heating pad available at all times, but still make sure that the kittens can move off of it. Place a small bowl of kibble, a saucer of gruel, and a stable, flat-bottomed cup of water in an accessible spot, away from their bedding. Fill a very shallow litter box (a box top or baking tin is fine) with non-clumping litter, and place it in an accessible spot away from the food dishes. At this point, the kittens will also want to play with toys! Feel free to give them plenty of plush dolls, balls, bells, etc. Just make sure there's nothing they could accidentally swallow or get tangled up in!

For Kittens Age 6 weeks and Up: At this age, kittens will likely begin door-dashing and trying to escape whatever enclosure they're confined to. If you would like to give them free run of your home, please do so with extreme caution. Kittens can and will get into everything. Never leave them unsupervised, particularly when there are other pets and/or roommates where you live! Also, remember that the more space they have, the less likely they are to find their litter box!

Most importantly, especially once they are over ~4 weeks old, make sure you socialize your kittens as often as possible! This is crucial to their development – they need to learn to love humans! Introduce them to friends, children, other cats, friendly dogs, etc., but **always** make sure they're in a controlled environment and are being closely supervised.

Neonatal Foster Program — Feeding Guidelines

We divide kittens into 3 categories for fostering:

| Feeding stage: | Age range: | Weight range: | Feeding frequency: |
|----------------|----------------|------------------|---|
| Bottle babies | 0 to ~4 weeks | 90 to 400 grams | Every 2-3 hours 4-5 hours overnight |
| Syringe gruel | 3 to ~6 weeks | 300 to 700 grams | Every 4-6 hours 6-8 hours overnight |
| Gruel/Kibble | 5 weeks and up | 700 grams and up | Every 4-6 hours 8-10 hours overnight |

The most important thing to remember when caring for kittens is to **WEIGH, WEIGH, WEIGH!** The vast majority of kittens who pass away in foster care do so *because they were not weighed as consistently as we require.*

Making sure your kittens are getting enough to eat is your most important duty as a foster! So, below are in-depth instructions on how to feed kittens according to their age and size, as well as info on issues to look out for during each stage of your kittens' growth. **Your foster**

mentor will be inquiring about your kittens' stools, so make sure you're keeping an eye on this!

Feeding— Bottle Babies

How to make formula:

Feed PetAg KMR® powdered formula from bottle and/or oral syringe. Mix 2 parts water to 1 part powdered formula (unless otherwise advised). Shake well to dissolve lumps! Store mixed formula in the fridge up to 48 hrs.

All kittens must eat **5% of their body weight** at each feeding. All kittens **must be weighed** before and after feeding!

Feeding instructions:

- Formula should be fed warm, preferably with kitten wrapped up in towel or blanket.
- Feed kitten upright or on belly in a **prone** position, **NOT** on his/her back like a human infant!
- Gather kittens' feeding charts and some warm towels.
- Bottle-feed the kitten first. Some kittens take a while to latch on, so be patient! If kitten does not gain its 5% via the bottle, proceed w/ syringe feeding. **Only use 1 mL syringe.**
- **Watch for formula coming out of kitten's nose or a rasping "wet" cough. This is called aspiration – it means the kitten has ingested formula into her lungs and is in danger of "drowning". If one of your kittens is aspirating, you need to do two things:**
 1. **Immediately email sickmedical@houstonpetsalive.org and cc BBMentor@HoustonPetsAlive.org**
Kitten will need antibiotics ASAP
 2. **Once no more formula is coming out of kitten's nose, continue feeding.**
- Thoroughly clean off any formula on kitten's fur and dry kitten off. (Formula will stick and is very hard to remove if it dries and is also painful for the kitten!)
- Weigh and record at the end of everyday at the same time of day.
- After each meal, **stimulate kitten** w/tissue paper or toilet paper to help with urine/stool bowel movement. The kitten will not always have to go, but it is *crucial* that this step is performed after every feeding. *Failure to stimulate orphan kittens can lead to serious illness and/or death*

*****MAKE SURE YOU'RE WEIGHING YOUR KITTENS AFTER EVERY FEEDING TO ENSURE THAT THEY'VE GAINED THEIR 5%!*****

Feeding— Syringe Gruelies

Bottle babies should be switched to syringe gruel when they reach 3.5-4 weeks old (when their canine teeth begin to grow in). Instead of KMR, kittens will now eat **premium** (only available at pet stores) canned kitten food mixed w/ water and blended to a smooth paste.

It is important to note that the syringe gruel phase is, essentially, nothing more than a layover between nursing (formula or mama's milk), and weaning (eating independently). So, at this stage, you should make sure your kittens always have access to kibble, gruel, (canned food w/ water), and a **bowl of water**, as eventually they will decide to go it on their own!

Until that magical day, though, you will need to step in! Remember that just because you see your kittens eating on their own, this does not mean that they're eating *enough* independently to maintain their health. Too often, fosters assume that because they've witnessed their kittens eating kibble or gruel from a bowl, those kittens don't need to be syringe fed anymore. ***This is not the case – and failure to follow the steps outlined above can lead to serious illness and/or death of kittens.***

How to make syringe gruel:

You will need a **blender**. Blend approximately one can of food with 1/3 to 1/2 can water (double, triple, etc as needed). Your syringe gruel should be about the consistency of a milkshake, and you should be able to easily draw it up into a syringe.

Again, kittens must eat **5% of their body weight** at each feeding. Kittens **must be weighed** before and after feeding.

Feeding instructions:

- First, give your kitten the opportunity to eat independently! Offer kitten warmed up gruel and kibble in separate plates or shallow bowls. If kitten shows no interest after awhile, proceed with syringe feeding.
- With syringe in your dominant hand, use your non-dominant index finger and thumb to grip the kitten's head at her temples. Tilt kitten's head back at about a 45-degree angle, using your palm to gently force kitten into a seated position.
- Draw warmed syringe gruel (microwave to a bit above lukewarm temp – no more than 5-10 seconds) into 10mL syringe.
- Insert syringe into **side** of kitten's mouth. *Do not put syringe directly in front of kitten's mouth* (even if she tries to position herself this way!) as kitten could very easily choke.
- Slowly plunge syringe gruel into kitten's mouth, removing the syringe every few seconds to allow her to swallow.
- Weigh kitten periodically throughout feeding process – the kitten is only done eating when she has gained her 5%!
- Always thoroughly clean off any gruel on the kitten's fur. Dry kitten off well.

Gruelies

This is the last stage of kitten rearing – rejoice! When your kittens begin eating enough gruel and kibble on their own to **gain weight consistently everyday**, you're well on your way to throwing those syringes out! Don't get too excited yet, though – your kittens will still need to be syringe fed if they're not able to eat 5% of their body-weight on their own. The switch from syringe gruel to gruel/kibble is not a magical "aha!" moment on your kitten's part – it's a process you'll both need to work through very thoughtfully!

Once you see that your kittens are gaining around 5% of their bodyweight on a daily basis, for at least 5 days, you can begin to weigh them twice a day, instead of every time they eat. **NEVER go more than 24 hours without weighing your kittens – weight loss is the number one reason kittens pass away in foster care!**

Minimum Feeding Requirements for Kittens Based on Weight

(5g food per 100g body weight/1g per 20g body weight)

| Weight of Kitten Before Feeding | Weight of Kitten After Feeding | Amount of Food Consumed | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| 60 | 63 | 3 | |
| 80 | 84 | 4 | |
| 100 | 105 | 5 | |
| 120 | 126 | 6 | |
| 140 | 147 | 7 | |
| 160 | 168 | 8 | |
| 180 | 189 | 9 | |
| 200 | 210 | 10 | |
| 220 | 231 | 11 | |
| 240 | 252 | 12 | |
| 260 | 273 | 13 | |
| 280 | 294 | 14 | |
| 300 | 315 | 15 | |
| 320 | 336 | 16 | |
| 340 | 357 | 17 | |
| 360 | 378 | 18 | |
| 380 | 399 | 19 | |
| 400 | 420 | 20 | |
| 420 | 441 | 21 | |
| 440 | 462 | 22 | |
| 460 | 483 | 23 | |
| 480 | 504 | 24 | |
| 500 | 525 | 25 | |
| 520 | 546 | 26 | |
| 540 | 567 | 27 | |
| 560 | 588 | 28 | |
| 580 | 609 | 29 | |
| 600 | 630 | 30 | |
| 620 | 651 | 31 | |
| 640 | 672 | 32 | |
| 660 | 693 | 33 | |
| 680 | 714 | 34 | |
| 700 | 735 | 35 | |

1 Feed bottle babies as much as they will take on their own from the bottle; syringe feed when they do not eat enough on their own.

2 When bottle babies have been syringe fed previously, try to bottle feed them first, then syringe feed if they won't eat from the bottle.

3 When gruel kittens have been syringe fed previously, see if they will eat on their own in a bin. If not, then syringe feed them. Be sure to chart their weights accurately.

4 If gruel kittens lose weight from previous feedings but have been eating on their own, syringe feed the required amount. Be sure to accurately record beginning and ending weights.

5 If the kitten eats on its own in a bin, be sure to record the beginning and ending weights accurately.

6 WEIGH ~ FEED ~ WEIGH

Food Recommendations

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Kittens age 0-4 weeks</p> |  | <p>BB Formula: PetAg KMR® powder formula mixed 2:1 (2 parts water to 1 part powder). Serve warm.</p> <p>Each kitten should take in 5cc (or 5 grams) for every 100 grams of body weight at every feeding.</p> <p>The nursery sells formula for \$20 per pound. Bottle and nipple sets are \$5.</p> |
| <p>Kittens age 3-8 weeks (once canine teeth have begun to come in)</p> |  | <p>Syringe gruel = canned food blended to milkshake-like consistency and warmed.</p> <p>Gruel = canned food mixed to applesauce-like consistency and served warm on a plate.</p> <p>Any brand of premium kitten food is fine, but we recommend Nutro as it's high quality and cost effective!</p> |
| |  | <p>Kibble: Once your kittens have their canines, have kibble available at all times, along with a bowl of water.</p> <p>Royal Canin Babycat is what we feed kittens at the nursery as it's highly palatable and the extra-small kibble size is ideal for weaning kittens.</p> <p>Again, any brand of <i>premium</i> kitten kibble will do.</p> |
| <p>Supplements for syringe gruel & gruel kittens</p> |  | <p>Baby food: Mix ~tablespoon of baby food with gruel or kibble for finicky eaters! Also useful for encouraging new gruelies to eat on their own. Buy plain baby food with no spices. Ingredients should only be turkey/chicken and turkey/chicken broth.</p> <p>Tomlyn Nutri-Cal: Great for underweight kittens. Follow instructions on bottle and add appropriate amount to syringe gruel or gruel.</p> |

Pro-tip: Adding a bit of plain canned pumpkin (not pumpkin pie filling!) to gruel or syringe gruel can help with minor diarrhea/loose stool MAKE SURE YOU'RE WEIGHING YOUR KITTENS!

Common Household Hazards for Kittens

Even the most experienced fosters sometimes overlook household hazards. The following is a list of things that we have seen cause injury to kittens.

- **Rocking chairs** - keep out of the kittens' area
- **Reclining chairs** - kittens can easily crawl inside
- **Toilets** - keep lids closed at all times
- **Bathtubs**- keep water drained at all times
- **Doors** - make sure that kittens are not behind doors that are being opened
- **Exits** - keep unscreened doors and windows closed at all times when not in use
- **Outdoors** - do NOT allow kittens to go outside, NO EXCEPTIONS!
- **Other cats** - can sometimes be asymptomatic carriers of viruses that are more harmful to kittens, or can be too aggressive with kittens
- **Dogs** - all dogs (but especially large dogs) can easily injure a kitten, often accidentally
- **Washers and dryers** - kittens can crawl inside of the machines unnoticed or get stuck behind them
- **Other appliances** - make sure that kittens cannot crawl behind or under refrigerators, ovens, etc.
- **Holes** - make sure any holes in drywall or cabinetry are plugged or blocked
- **Small objects** - rubber bands, strings, paperclips, and other small objects can be accidentally ingested
- **Chemicals** - make sure they are put away
- **House plants** - many are poisonous to cats, make sure they are out of reach
- **Electrical cords** - can be sprayed with bitter apple, covered with tape or “cord covers” to prevent chewing

Deceased Kittens

In the unfortunate event that one of your kittens has died, for any reason, please **contact us right away**. Please do not be embarrassed or afraid to reach out – these things happen. Kittens are fragile creatures, and unfortunately some of them are just not equipped to make it in this world.

Use the following chart to determine who to contact:

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>If a Kitten UNDER 8 Weeks is Lost</p> | <p>If a Kitten OVER 8 Weeks is Lost</p> |
| <p>Please email Neonatal@HoustonPetsAlive.org immediately— we will help you find the kitten!</p> | <p>Please email CatFoster@HoustonPetsAlive.org immediately— we will help you find the kitten!</p> |
| <p>If a kitten UNDER 8 Weeks has Passed Away</p> | <p>If a Kitten OVER 8 Weeks has Passed Away</p> |
| <p>We are so sorry for your loss. Please email Neonatal@HoustonPetsAlive.org and CC BBMentors@HoustonPetsAlive.org and SickMedical@HoustonPetsAlive.org <i>Subject line: “Name/ID# Passed Away”</i></p> | <p>We are so sorry for your loss. Please email CatFoster@HoustonPetsAlive.org and CC CatRescue@HoustonPetsAlive.org and SickMedical@HoustonPetsAlive.org <i>Subject line: “Name/ID# Passed Away”</i></p> |

Please describe what happened. Label a plastic bag with the kitten's name and ID#. Wrap the kitten in a towel and place inside the bag. Place the bag in the freezer and wait for further instructions from the team.

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Fading Kitten Syndrome

You are **not** receiving this handout because Fading Kitten Syndrome is a common occurrence, but rather because if you ever encounter this condition, **YOU** will need to take action **IMMEDIATELY**. The worst thing you can do for a fading kitten is to take him/her to your vet – most kittens will not survive the car ride. **YOU** are this kitten's best chance at making it.

Fading Kitten Syndrome is a life-threatening emergency in which a kitten “crashes” and begins to fade away. Kittens under 3 weeks old and/or kittens who are, or were recently sick, are most susceptible to FKS. Oftentimes, it occurs in kittens who have been eating poorly, and losing, or, not gaining, weight. This is why it is **VITAL** that you weigh your kittens every time they're fed.

Although it is rare, FKS can also occur in healthy kittens at any age.

Symptoms of FKS:

- Extreme lethargy — unable to stand or hold head up, not responding when touched
- Body feels cool to the touch (not just insides of ears – all over)
- Panting or gasping for breath
- Meowing/crying out in distress

If you see these symptoms, it is crucial that you take the following steps NOW:

Step 1: GET KITTEN WARM (*think: Burrito*)

Grab your heating pad and a towel. Place the towel over the heating pad, and place kitten on top of towel. Roll heating pad up to create a “kitten burrito” – like you're swaddling an infant. Leave the kitten's face exposed, and do not remove kitten from the burrito even if he/she struggles and cries to get out! Make sure the heating pad is still on the **low** setting.

* If you don't have immediate access to a heating pad, you can either:

- 1) Keep your dryer running full of towels. Grab a new hot one every 5 minutes and wrap it around the “burrito” towel. After 5 minutes, trade that towel out for a new hot one. Don't remove the “burrito” towel.
- 2) Fill 2 socks full of rice, tie the ends so it doesn't spill out. Throw them in the microwave for 3 minutes. Keep them next to the kitten on the outside of the burrito towel. Every 30 minutes reheat one sock and leave the other next to the kitten so she doesn't cool off.

Step 2: GET KITTEN'S BLOOD SUGAR UP

Grab a small bowl and fill it with either corn syrup (Karo, etc), or sugar water. The more sugar content, the better. Make sure you have your syringe handy. Warm the contents up in the

microwave for a few seconds until the liquid is a bit above room temperature. You will administer this sugar water (with the syringe) to the kitten while he/she is in the burrito.

Give the kitten about 1 drop every 3 minutes.

Prognosis

We generally have a high success rate with these kittens if you follow the above steps! The process can take hours, so be prepared to administer the steps outlined above for anywhere from one to three to even five hours.

****We DO NOT recommend you rush your foster kitten to the vet for many reasons****

You have the motivation to sit right there with them and make them your top priority. A vet clinic has multiple patients who need help and won't be able to give your kitten the 100% undivided attention you can give them.

Your kitten will continue to be cold/hypoglycemic on the way to the vet, in the waiting room, and in the hospital while they try to determine what is wrong, etc. Most kittens won't last long enough for them to begin treatment.

Dr. Jefferson at APA! created these protocols based on what would be done if she saw these patients in a her clinic. Most clinics would do the same thing – try to keep the kitten warm and get their blood sugar up. There isn't much else you can do.

Keep in mind that it can sometimes take hours for them to come out of this state and start acting normally again. Don't give up! Once they do come out of it, make sure you contact the med techs to discuss what could have possibly caused them to fade in the first place, and make sure we have the kitten on all the right medical treatments for any illnesses they have that may have caused it.

Unfortunately, even if you've employed all of the steps outlined above to a tee, some kittens just won't make it. Cats get pregnant very easily, and have A LOT of kittens, specifically because they are so fragile. If a kitten passes in your care, don't blame yourself – these kittens would have had 0% chance of surviving if it wasn't for you. Send us an email if your kitten has passed and focus on taking the best care of his/her littermates.

Thank you for everything you do, fosters!