



Caring for New Puppies and Kittens

No two ways about it, puppies and kittens are adorable. It's easy to be transfixed by the tiny paws, tiny noses, and big bellies galloping around your house in a riot of excitement. Puppy- and kittenhood, the first six months of life, can be one of the best times in a pet's life, but it requires some diligence and special care from loving pet owners.

First off, if you're in the market for a new pet, be sure you allow him enough time with his mother and his littermates to be healthy and well socialized. Young animals should be adopted when they're ready to be, somewhere between 8-12 weeks for kittens and 8-12 weeks puppies. Once you get them home, and have picked up the litter, collar, leash, pet bed, and everything else you need, you can start to be a wonderful pet parent.

The first thing you should do with your new puppy or kitten is make an appointment to see your veterinarian. Young animals, whose immune systems are not yet running at full force, are more vulnerable to parasites like fleas and worms as well as respiratory infections and other conditions. Your veterinarian will record your pet's weight, perform a physical exam, and do a fecal exam or a blood test, in order to rule out parasites or other potential problems. There are several conditions, such as orthopedic problems, that can be effectively treated if they are caught when animals are young, so seeing a veterinarian early is vital.

It's also important that your pet sees the veterinarian because he needs to be immunized. Puppies and kittens are initially immune to many diseases because of the antibodies they receive from their mother's milk. After weaning, however they need to receive a series of vaccines in order to develop immunity on their own.

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