

Bottle Feeding Kittens

 cat-world.com.au/bottle-feeding-kittens.html



Making the decision to hand-raise a kitten takes time and commitment. Neonates will need to be fed, cleaned and helped to go to the toilet every 2-3 hours, around the clock until the kitten is old enough to start solid food.

Bottle feeding equipment

Ideally, you will have equipment specifically for bottle feeding kittens, which includes:

- Three to four bottles
- 3-4 teats – The Animal Welfare League recommend Wombaroo bottles which are the easiest for kittens to latch onto. Kitten Lady (Hannah Shaw) recommends PetAg, Pet Nurser, and Miracle Nipple. Check to see if the tip of the teat has a hole in it if it doesn't make a small X with a pair of cuticle scissors or burn a hole with a large needle. The hole should be large enough to allow the milk to pass through it, but small enough that it doesn't pour out. To test, fill the bottle and turn it upside down, the milk should drip out one drop at a time.
- Kitten milk replacer (KMR) – Brands include Divetelact, Wombaroo and Biolac.
- Bottle and syringe for measuring out the milk.
- Cleaning brushes
- Digital scales

All of these should be available from your veterinarian or pet supply store.

Emergency

In an emergency, if you don't have the right equipment at hand, it may be necessary to use what is on hand until you can get to a pet store or veterinarian.

Syringe with the needle removed or an eyedropper if you don't have bottles.

Do not feed straight cow's milk to kittens; it is not nutritionally balanced. The following recipes can be used for 24 hours until you can purchase a KMR.

Home made kitten formula 1

- 90 ml condensed milk
- 90 ml water
- 120 ml plain (full fat) yoghurt
- 3 to 4 egg yolks

Home made kitten formula 2

- 2/3 cup homogenised while milk
- 3 raw egg yolks
- 1 tablespoon corn oil
- 1 dropper pediatric liquid vitamins

Second recipe courtesy [The Feline Foundation Greater Washington](#)

Mix all of the ingredients well and warm to 100 F (37.7 C).

Preparing formula

- Wash your hands and prepare the milk as per the manufacturer's instructions.
- Formula is available in both dried and pre-mixed preparations. Always follow the instructions on the packet. If using powdered formula, mix with warm water in a clean container or jug and stir until it is completely smooth.
- Warm the formula 100 F (37.7 C) by resting in a jug of boiling water. Test the temperature by squeezing a small amount on the back of your wrist to make sure it is not too cool or hot.
- Measure the calculated volume of milk with a large syringe and place in the bottle.

Pre-mixed formula can be stored in the refrigerator for 24 hours, discard after that.

How to bottle feed a kitten

Feed the kitten on his or her belly and not on the back (see picture), which puts the kitten at risk of aspiration, where fluid is inhaled into the lungs.



Incorrect



Correct

Place the kitten belly down, hold the bottle in your dominant hand and support the head with the non-dominant hand, rest a finger gently on the kitten's throat so that you can feel he or she is swallowing.



Kittens nursing from their mother on their belly

- Squeeze a drop out onto the tip of the teat and on the kitten's tongue; this should stimulate the kitten to suckle. The kitten's tongue should form a U shape around the teat (see the first image), and the ears and whiskers will move. Do not force milk into the kitten's mouth; let the kitten suckle it out. If the kitten refuses to suckle, think like a cat, when kittens wake up, the mother gently licks them and nudges them to the nipple, gently stroke the kittens to simulate this.
- Hold the bottle at a 45-degree angle, with the base higher than the teat. Don't squeeze the bottle, as this will force too much milk into the kitten's mouth, and can potentially choke the kitten or aspirate into the lungs.
- Once the kitten has finished wipe the mouth with a damp cloth to remove milk residue.
- Burp the kitten with gentle pats on the back.
- Kittens cannot urinate and defecate on their own and rely on their mother, after feeding, gently wipe the area with a soft cloth or tissue to stimulate the kitten to go to the toilet.

Tips for bottle feeding:

When kittens need a feed, the mother cat will gently lick them, and sometimes it can help to gently brush the kitten with a soft toothbrush to encourage nursing.

Some kittens are all limbs, and it can be difficult to keep them still, try gently wrapping them burrito-style to help them remain steady while feeding.

If you are hand-raising kittens without a mother, it can help to place a soft toy in the nest to keep them settled. Unsettled kittens can be laid on the soft toy and fed that way to mimic how they would feed on their mother.

If the kitten is fussy or not interested, check that he or she is warm enough and the milk is the correct temperature and try again. Some kittens will skip the occasional feeding, try again in 30-60 minutes.

How much milk do kittens need?

In the first 3-4 weeks of life, kittens require frequent small meals. As kittens grow older, the amount of milk they drink increases, but the frequency of meals decreases.

Age	Weight (grams)	Weight (oz)	20 calories per 100g body weight	Daily volume milk (ml)	Stomach capacity (ml)(4ml per 100g body weight)	No. of feedings
Newborn	50	1.8	10	13.5	2	8-12
	75	2.6	15	20	3	8-12
	100	3.5	20	27	4	8-12
	125	4.4	25	34	5	8-12
1 week	150	5.3	30	40	6	8
	175	6.2	35	47	7	8
	200	7	40	54	8	8
	225	8	45	61	9	8
2 weeks	250	8.8	50	68	10	6
	275	9.7	55	74	11	6
	300	10.6	60	81	12	6
	325	11.5	65	88	13	6
3 weeks	350	12.3	70	95	14	4
	375	13.2	75	101	15	4
	400	14.1	80	108	16	4
	425	15	85	115	17	4

4 weeks	450	15.9	90	122	18	4
	475	16.8	95	128	19	4
	500	17.6	100	100	135	4
	525	18.5	105	142	21	4
5 weeks	550	19.4	110	148	22	4

Weighing kittens

The importance of weighing kittens once a day to track their progress cannot be over emphasised. The average kitten should gain 10 grams (0.3 oz) per day.

Safety

- Never feed a kitten who is lethargic or having difficulty swallowing.
- Do not feed a kitten whose temperature is too hot or too cold as it is not safe. Warm or cool the kitten if necessary, before offering the bottle.
- Do not re-use leftover milk.
- Clean the bottles with hot soapy water after every use, rinse well to remove soap residue and allow to air dry.

When to seek veterinary attention

Young kittens are extremely fragile, and even with the best of care, can quickly deteriorate. The carer must monitor the kitten and seek help if you notice any of the following:

- Not gaining weight or losing weight
- Refusing more than one meal
- Lethargy
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Pale gums

How often do kittens feed?

- 0 – 1 week: Every 2-3 hours
- 1 – 2 weeks: Every 3 hours
- 2 – 3 weeks: Every 4 hours
- 3 weeks and over: Every 6 hours

Resources

There is a network of kitten foster carers as well as rescue groups who band together and share a wealth of knowledge as well as support for people hand-rearing kittens. Kitten Lady (Hannah Shaw) has kindly created a site with excellent first-hand knowledge of all things related to caring for kittens, providing both videos as well as written posts.