

How Can You Tell Your Cat Is Pregnant?

Recognizing Physical Signs and Behavioural Changes

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You're probably reading this because you feel your unsprayed cat, aka queen, looks a tad different and has not been feeling herself lately. It's got you wondering, "Could she be pregnant?" Well, it's good that you thought about it because if she is really going to be a mother, she definitely needs your support to have a safe and happy pregnancy.

Similar to humans, cats experience physical and behavioural changes when pregnant. So, what should you expect when your cat is expecting? And what is your role as a pet parent during that period? Let's take a deep dive into cat pregnancy today!

First up, cat pregnancy fast facts you need to know

We've got you covered if you're curious about cat pregnancy age, gestation period, mating behaviours, and other related information. Cat pregnancies differ from species within their family, humans, and other mammals. Here's a rundown of the essential details you need to know about cat pregnancy:

- A queen can experience her first heat cycle as young as four months old and can get pregnant at that age if she's around sexually mature male cats.
- Female felines engage in inbreeding, indicating they can choose their close relatives, including their brothers or fathers, for mating.
- Cats can get pregnant with multiple partners, meaning kittens of the same litter can have different fathers. As a result, every kitten is unique in appearance and personality.
- Cat pregnancies last roughly two months or 63-65 days. It means cats can get pregnant up to five times a year. However, for health reasons, vets recommend no more than 1-2 pregnancies per year.
- First-time queens will birth smaller litters of up to 2-3 kittens. During her following pregnancies, she can have larger litters comprising nine or more kittens. However, the average litter size across different breeds is 4-6 kittens.
- Fertility in cats starts declining when they turn around eight years old. However, since they don't experience menopause, they can get pregnant until the end of life.

Seven tell-tale signs your cat is soon to be a mommy

Recognizing cat pregnancy is difficult, especially in the first two trimesters. Yet, as discussed below, there are some signs you can watch out for!

1. Your cat has nipple changes.

If you notice your cat's nipples are rosier and perked up compared to before, she may be undergoing a process known as "pinking up," one of the first physical signs of pregnancy. Nipple changes generally start towards the end of the first trimester, 16-20 days into the pregnancy. As the pregnancy progresses, your queen's nipples and surrounding areas may swell up further, along with some milky or clear discharge.

What is concerning? If your kitty's nipple discharge is discoloured, bloody, foul-smelling, or abnormal in any other way, take her to the vet immediately.

2. Your cat has gained extra pounds and has a visibly larger belly.

Weight gain is another general symptom of cat pregnancy. Your queen will gain 1-2 kgs throughout her pregnancy, depending on the number of kittens growing in her womb. Pregnancy weight gain in cats occurs in the stomach area. It becomes more apparent in the later stages of pregnancy when she develops a "pot belly".

What is concerning? If your cat has gained weight overall, with fat over her neck, paws, face, legs, and other body parts, she's likely overweight or obese, not pregnant. Follow nutrition and lifestyle tips to bring your kitty to a healthy weight.

3. Your cat has morning sickness.

Cats experience nausea, vomiting, lethargy, and appetite loss during early pregnancy. However, unlike pregnant humans, your cat may feel queasy anytime during the day instead of just in the morning. The sickness may last from a few days to a week. While it's an uncommon pregnancy symptom, you must be prepared to support your mamma cat if she experiences it. How can you do that? It's simple: provide her ample clean water to prevent dehydration and take her to your vet.

What is concerning? If your cat is vomiting without having any other pregnancy symptoms, it can indicate health issues such as food allergies, poisoning, or infections.

4. Your cat catches a wink way more often than before

On average, cats sleep about 12-15 hours a day. When they are expecting, they will likely take more frequent naps, totalling 16-20 hours a day. But what makes them sleep more than usual? First, physical and hormonal changes create havoc in their bodies, increasing fatigue and causing them to nap more. Additionally, the extra sleep helps preserve energy for the demanding tasks of motherhood, such as ensuring the healthy development of the kittens, giving birth, and nursing them.

What is concerning? If your cat sleeps for extended periods, it could also mean she is unwell, stressed, or bored.

5. Your cat has suddenly started pouring her love on you.

You used to yearn for your cat's affection, but now she comes to you for frequent cuddles on her own. Your cat used to mind her own business, but now she's more loud and vocal, seeking your attention. What changed your kitty? One word: Hormones. Your queen looks to you for comfort and safety during her pregnancy, so give her all the extra attention she needs.

What is concerning? If your cat turns overly affectionate and clingy all of a sudden, it can also suggest she is facing certain health conditions, anxiety, or trauma.

6. Your cat has started demanding more food.

While your cat may not feel like eating much during the early stages of her pregnancy due to nausea and vomiting, you'll notice a significant increase in her appetite afterwards. She must eat more than usual to support herself and the growing kittens. So, if you see a change in her eating habits, it may be a sign that your queen will be a mother soon.

What is concerning? If your cat's appetite increases, a few medical complications such as hyperthyroidism, diabetes, and malnutrition can also be the root cause.

7. Your cat is displaying nesting behaviours.

A few weeks before giving birth, your furry mommy-to-be will choose a quiet, cosy, and comfortable spot, aka her nesting area, to deliver her kittens. You'll also notice her becoming more territorial and intolerant of other pets invading her space. She may also start camping in her nesting area a week before she goes into labour. She may not interact much with you at this point, so provide her with the space she wants!

What is concerning? If your cat becomes reclusive and starts hiding out more often, it could also mean she's in pain, sick, stressed, or depressed.

Okay, the signs suggest my cat might be pregnant. What should I do next?

First off, do not panic! Thinking about welcoming cute little furballs into your home can be both exciting and overwhelming at the same time. But keep your cool and follow these steps:

- **Step 1:** Book an appointment with your vet. They will perform a physical exam, blood test, ultrasound, and other relevant tests to confirm if she is pregnant, determine the pregnancy stage, and figure out how many kittens she's carrying. Plus, since the symptoms can also mean other physical and mental health complications, it is essential to rule them out, too!
- **Step 2:** Make the relevant changes in her routine to ensure a healthy pregnancy. Provide her with a high-calorie and nutritious diet, keep her hydrated, ensure a stress-free environment, clean her litter box, and prepare a cosy birthing space.
- **Step 3:** Learn about cat labour and delivery so that you can support mama kitty when her big day arrives!
- **Step 4:** Lastly, if you don't want your cat to become pregnant again, consider spaying her after she gives birth and recovers.