



# Orphaned Kitten Foster Guide

**Thank you for joining us in saving lives!** This program saves at-risk orphaned kittens by placing them into dedicated and prepared foster homes ready to provide around-the-clock care until they are eating on their own. This is a basic reference guide about our Kitten Foster Program from start to finish!

## BEFORE you take home kittens...

- Complete the full onboarding process** so that you are fully prepared to care for kittens. We greatly rely on foster parents to learn as much as they can beforehand. You should receive an email with these onboarding steps. Be sure to take the quiz as the last step to become an approved bottle feeder kitten foster parent!
  1. **Read this guide thoroughly!**
  2. **Read our [Cat Foster Guide](#)** for details about PAWS' full cat foster process
  3. **Watch Kitten Lady's videos: [How to Bottle Feed](#) and [How to Give A Flea Bath](#)** (it's safe to use a blow dryer on a low setting to dry a kitten. Hold at least 2 feet away and oscillate to avoid overheating).
  4. **Complete the [Kitten Quiz](#)** (100% score is needed)!
- More great resources** all about caring for kittens can be found here: [kittenlady.org/kitten-care](http://kittenlady.org/kitten-care)
- In-Person Bottle-Feeding Demo!** We don't have in-person training sessions, but we will happily show you how to feed the litter you are taking home the day you pick it up. Remember that each litter is a little different.
- Ready to take home a litter?** Fill out this form: [phillypaws.org/kitten-foster-availability](http://phillypaws.org/kitten-foster-availability). We also email and post on our foster Facebook group when we have kittens in need of foster care. For bottle feeder kittens, email [foster@phillypaws.org](mailto:foster@phillypaws.org) to coordinate. We may ask you to pick up a litter of kittens directly from the city shelter and bring them to PAWS for their intake exam. If you need to pick up supplies, please let us know!
- Communication is crucial for a successful foster process!** Stay in touch with us- both with concerns and happy updates! Please reply to our emails/calls in a timely manner within 24 hours.
- You must have access to transportation.** Baby kittens are very fragile, so you must have a plan (a friend who drives, Lyft, etc.) in case the kittens need to be transported immediately to our clinic.
- Foster Resources:** [phillypaws.org/foster-resources](http://phillypaws.org/foster-resources) - Bookmark this one-stop-shop for all your foster needs!
- Once approved, join our groups:** Facebook (Philly PAWS Fosters); Google Groups
- Gather your supplies:** See a full list of supplies on the next page!

<p><b>Foster Email:</b> <a href="mailto:foster@phillypaws.org">foster@phillypaws.org</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <u>Email is the best way to reach us!</u></li><li>- Use subject line: "URGENT" for urgent issues</li><li>- Use subject line: "Time Sensitive" for timely issues</li></ul> <p><b>Only true emergencies</b> should call the emergency phone!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Emergency phone: 215-650-7281</li><li>- See more about emergencies on page 4</li></ul>	<p><b>Foster Office &amp; Clinic Location:</b> 2900 Grays Ferry Ave. Philadelphia PA 19146</p> <p><b>Foster Office Hours:</b> 9 am-5 pm every day Foster pick-up by appt only.</p> <p><b>Foster Office Number:</b> 215-298-9680 ext. 16 - the fastest way to contact us is by email!</p>
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## Need more support?

**Mentor Program!** Let us know if you want to be connected to an experienced mentor volunteer for support!

**Need a kitten sitter or a foster transfer?** If you need a sitter for a day or several days, or if you truly need a break, we completely understand. Ideally you would try to give us some time to help you find a sitter or transfer. You can post to the Facebook page and email the Google Group to take initiative in finding an approved foster!

**Gentle Reminder:** Sadly, there are times that kittens fail to thrive in our care and unexpectedly pass away, even with our best efforts. If you provided all recommended care, please don't ever blame yourself! We know that you did everything you could, gave them a chance, and showed them a loving home. Please let staff know if you need more emotional support, even if you just need to talk it through in person or over the phone.

## Kitten supplies!

**PAWS Supplies:** Bottle-feeders specifically *come with these supplies*. If anything is running low, let us know asap. If you already have supplies, let us know and consider having extra KMR or kitten wet food on hand, just in case.

- Safe and secure carrier for bottle feeder kittens - we need this back once weaned!
- KMR formula, bottles, miracle nipples, scale, baby wipes and a snuggle heat disc
- Starter wet & dry kitten food (if you will have the kittens until they are weaned or adopted)
- PAWS covers medical care and treatments until adoption!



**Foster Acquired Supplies:** You will also want to have the following materials on hand ahead of time:

- Daily Kitten Diary (a notebook to monitor bottle feeders)
- Soft tissues or cotton balls (to stimulate and clean)
- Cotton pads (to clean the kittens' faces)
- Blue Dawn dish soap (for baths)
- Tweezers and flea comb (to pick off fleas)
- Vaseline (for their rear ends, in case they get a little sore)
- Shredded paper or Yesterday's News litter for when weaning starts
- Litter pan (cardboard boxes from wet food packaging work great)
- Playpen for when they start walking
- For emergencies: NutriCal, Karo syrup, unflavored maple syrup, or regular sugar mixed with warm water.
- For emergencies: Thermometer



**Pro tip!** Set up an online wishlist to share with your network so that anyone who would like to support you can donate supplies! There are many people who aren't able to foster, but still want to help!

**Daily Kitten Diary:** Keep a "diary" for each litter of bottle feeders that you foster. You can use a notebook, a phone app, or a word doc. Please log the following for every feeding (every 2-4 hours, depending on age) with:

- Date & time of their feeding
- Each kitten's name / amount in ml eaten / pee / poop / weight (see [fecal score chart](#))
- Fussy / Fed with bottle or syringe
- If there are any other concerns or anything out of the ordinary that you are observing

**Note:** Kittens should be urinating after every feeding and ideally defecating once daily.

## Gotta know about kitten care!

**Separation:** Your kittens should be kept separate from all other animals. We want to prevent disease transmission and stress to your pets. If you decide to introduce your pets to your foster pets, ALWAYS confirm with staff before introducing and ensure everyone is **healthy for at least 2 weeks outside the shelter + tested for FIV/FelV + has had at least one FVRCP shot!** See our *Feline Medical Guide* for more about common symptoms and illnesses, plus how to administer medications.

**Living Space:** The living area for a litter of kittens should be small enough that they aren't able to wander off and get lost or injure themselves. Be sure to provide several soft and warm blankets/bed areas large enough for the kittens to all sleep comfortably together. **Recommended setups:**

- **Newborn to ~3 wks old:** A safe enclosure should be small so that they don't wander off and get cold, or a small playpen or carrier. A medium carrier or large open plastic bin with high walls works well!
- **~3 wks old (more mobile) to ~5 wks old:** Small playpen big enough for litter pan, bedding, and toys.
- **~5 wks old til adopted!** = Small secure room like a tile bathroom or office, or large playpen. Make sure to "kitten proof" the area before the kittens arrive. Block underneath furniture, check for hiding places like holes in walls or mattresses, place baby gates at doors and stairs to prevent quick escapes, and put away dangerous or breakable knick-knacks.

**Warmth:** It's crucial to keep young kittens warm, as they cannot regulate their body temperature until 3-4 weeks old and a dropping body temperature can be very dangerous. Prolonged exposure to cold results in a drop of body temperature (hypothermia) and therefore a drop in the blood sugar level (hypoglycemia). The kitten's internal organs begin a systematic shutdown. If a kitten feels cold to the touch, hypothermia has set in. A kitten's condition is critical at this point.

To keep kittens warm – always use the snuggle disc that is provided in the carrier and make sure it is warm. Be very careful if using a heating pad as they can become too hot and cause burns. They should NEVER be placed in direct contact with kittens. Be sure to keep it set to low and it should be placed underneath the blanket and only cover the bottom half of the nesting area. Always leave an area for kittens to move off of the heat in case it's too hot for them. The bedding temperature should be around 85 degrees Fahrenheit.

### Warming a Chilled Kitten

- **Never feed a kitten that is chilled or cold; this will kill the kitten!**
- Place the kitten in a warm space and "burrito-wrap" it in a towel
- Gently massage the kitten to get the circulation going
- Administering 0.01 cc/ml of Karo Syrup orally or by rubbing it on the gums of a hypoglycemic kitten will raise the blood sugar level of the kitten and help stabilize the kitten while you are warming it. *NutriCal is also effective. If you don't have NutriCal or Karo Syrup, you can mix a solution of water and sugar in equal parts, administered at 0.01 cc/ml.*

**Aspiration:** (inhalation of fluids into the lungs) of formula is fairly common. If it occurs, the kitten can be turned upside down and gently shaken once to help the fluid drain out. In very young kittens, a small bulb syringe or eyedropper can be used to suck the fluids out of the nostrils. Do not feed the kitten again until it has completely cleared the fluid from its lungs- this is usually accomplished by sneezing. **Aspiration can be a very dangerous situation and can lead to possible pneumonia and death. If crackling or popping is heard when the kitten breathes, contact the PAWS clinic right away.**

**Sanitation for Kittens:** Wash your hands before and after handling kittens to prevent spreading any illness. It is important to always keep bottle-feeding AND weaning kittens clean and dry. Clean kittens' faces and rear ends with a warm wet washcloth or unscented baby wipes – any dried-up milk, urine, or poop can cause severe skin infections and rawness. Be sure they are dry after every bathroom stimulation/accident. If their skin is red or raw, send a photo to the foster office. You can use Desitin or Vaseline to provide relief in the meantime.

**Suckling:** It's natural for kittens to suckle on each other or on your fingers, even after they're finished eating. This can be harmless unless you notice that this activity is causing irritation to other kittens' fur or skin. **Please separate kittens if they are suckling on other kittens' genitals. This can cause serious permanent damage.**

**Daily Cleaning of Living Area:** The kittens' living area should always be kept clean and this will require "spot cleaning" messy areas several times a day as well as "deep cleaning". Depending on how messy the kittens are, you may need to deep clean every day. Other things to note:

- When cleaning, place the kittens/cats in a separate area or carrier until the living area is dry.
- All surfaces, bowls, toys, etc. should be disinfected with cleaner and wiped down
- An area without carpet is recommended!
- Bedding should be kept clean, dry, and fresh. If the kittens have accidents, the bedding may need to be changed more often than once each day and washed with detergent, bleach, and a little fabric softener.
- If using a litter box – clean daily. Dewormed kittens can become re-infected by soiled bedding and litter.
- If feeding – wet food should not be left out for more than a few hours. If the wet food is crusting over, it should be discarded and replaced with fresh food. Wet food should NEVER be left to grow mold or attract bugs.
- Deep clean thoroughly between litters!
  - Wash all bedding on high heat with detergent and bleach or Rescue.
  - Use Rescue cleaner or dilute bleach on all floors, surfaces, litter boxes, and carriers
  - Vacuum floors and couches
  - Toss any porous toys or blankets that may have been in contact with Ringworm or Panleuk
- **Rescue Disinfectant** is a safe hydrogen peroxide-based cleaner designed for animal shelters and is great for foster homes. If used properly, it can kill common kitten illnesses like Panleuk and Ringworm. It can also be used in the wash and can be purchased online!

**Fleas:** Often when kittens are born outside, they can be infested with fleas. Fleas can quickly cause anemia and kill cats and kittens! While adult cats can receive topical flea treatment, these products are too harmful to be used on kittens under 1 ½ lbs so a flea bath is essential to remove fleas. Flea baths may need to be repeated if you don't get all of the fleas and eggs the first time. Only bathe kittens that are stable and not too fragile or sick.

#### Steps to Giving a Flea Bath ([Video by Kitten Lady](#))

1. Heat the room you will be bathing the kitten in to 85 degrees and keep them warm throughout!
2. Make sure the sink water is lukewarm. Do not submerge the kitten's head in the water.
3. Place a ring of soap around their neck to prevent fleas from crawling onto their face. Lather the kitten with water and dish soap to drown fleas. For the head, use a soft sponge or cotton pad.
4. You MUST leave the dish soap lathered in the kitten's coat for 10 mins to break down flea eggs.
5. Keep the kitten warm during the 10 minutes by wrapping it in a warm towel.
6. Pick off the fleas with tweezers or a flea comb.
7. Rinse off the dish soap with warm clean water.
8. Wrap the kitten in a warm towel and pat dry.
9. Use a hairdryer set to low/warm to dry the kitten and oscillate the dryer at a distance.
10. Place the kitten on a warm heat source!

**Aging:** Our medical staff will assess each kitten and estimate their age based on weight & teeth, but sometimes it's hard to tell! It's important to monitor the kitten's growth and progress closely. See Page 5 of the [Kitten Lady Booklet](#) for tips on accurately aging kittens. Let us know if you think the age on their records may be inaccurate.

**Weight:** Kittens need to be weighed every day and recorded in the Daily Kitten Diary, ideally before each feeding. Doing this will help you catch any issues early. If a kitten is losing/not gaining weight for 2-3 feedings in a row, please alert [foster@phillypaws.org](mailto:foster@phillypaws.org). See Page 6 and Page 7 of the [Kitten Lady Booklet](#) for kitten weights and feeding chart plus tips for fussy kittens to promote eating.

## How to bottle feed!

Watch Kitten Lady's [video about Bottle Feeding!](#)

### kitten weight and feeding chart

#### Steps:

1. **Stimulate** them to pee/poop
2. **Bottle feed** (see Kitten Lady's chart here for amount and frequency)
3. **Wipe** down their faces and bums to ensure they're clean!
4. **Weigh** the kittens and record everything in their Daily Kitten Diary including any observations
5. **Warmth:** Place the kitten back in their warm, safe space

AGE	WEIGHT	AMOUNT PER FEEDING	SCHEDULE
0-1 week	50-150 grams	2-6 ml	Every 2 hours
1-2 weeks	150-250 grams	6-10 ml	Every 2-3 hours
2-3 weeks	250-350 grams	10-14 ml	Every 3-4 hours
3-4 weeks	350-450 grams	14-18 ml	Every 4-5 hours
4-5 weeks	450-550 grams	18-22 ml	Every 5-6 hours
5-8 weeks	550-850 grams	(weaning; offer ample wet food)	Every 6 hours

You'll notice that as the kitten gets older, the amount increases and frequency decreases. Use your judgment to adjust as necessary; for instance, if a kitten is eating less at each feeding, you may want to increase the frequency. Meet the kittens where they are.

**Preparing Formula:** When preparing a bottle or feeding, you should first wash your hands. Wash your hands after you're done with the kittens each time. Bottles should be sterilized often too!

- PAWS currently provides foster parents with bottles and KMR powder formula. Breeders Edge is another good brand, but changing up the formula brand can cause upset bellies and diarrhea.
- PAWS will provide an amazing product called a Miracle Nipple. You will likely want to replace the standard bottle nipple with the Miracle Nipple. There are two sizes of Miracles Nipples!
- KMR formula needs to be refrigerated, even the unmixed powder. It expires within 24 hours of being mixed so only mix small amounts as needed. It can stay good in the fridge unmixed for 2 months and in the freezer unmixed for 6 months!
- The nipple opening should be just big enough if, when the bottle is held upside-down, formula drips slowly from it. Too small an opening will make kittens work too hard to get their formula, tiring them out before they've had enough to eat. Too large an opening will force too much formula into them, too fast.
- **KMR formula should be mixed at 1 part formula: 2 parts warm water.** Shake the mixture and ensure all formula clumps have dissolved. It's dangerous for kittens to swallow chunks of unmixed powder.
- Formula should be warmed to 100-102 F. The temperature can be tested on your wrist. If it burns your skin, it is too hot to feed to kittens. You can microwave it in the bottle for no longer than 10 seconds (be sure to shake the bottle well after heating), or place the bottle in a bowl of hot water for a few minutes.

**Feeding and Positioning:** Kittens are most comfortable in a position similar to the one they'd be in if they were nursing from their mother.

1. Place the kitten on its stomach on a towel or blanket across a table or your lap - make sure the towels are clean. **Never feed a kitten on their back!**
2. To keep air from getting into the kitten's stomach, hold the bottle at a 35 to 45-degree angle, keeping a light pull on the bottle. The kitten should be allowed to suck at its own pace.
3. Open the mouth gently with the tip of your finger and slip the nipple in.
4. Once your kitten "gets the hang of it", they will search out the nipple eagerly, but this step may take some time. You will feel a real "vacuum effect" when the kitten gets into suckle mode.
5. Nursing bottles are marked with measurements so it's easy to keep track of how much they eat. Be sure to keep track of how much they eat in their Daily Kitten Diary.
6. When a kitten has had enough formula, it will usually get some bubbles around its mouth and its tummy will be very rounded, almost pear-shaped.
7. After feeding, you should burp the kitten just like you'd burp a human baby; hold it upright against your shoulder and pat it on the back.
8. Do not overfeed the kittens since this can cause diarrhea and other problems. Kittens will happily sleep after they're fed and full!



**Feeding Tips:** Is the kitten fussy and won't latch? They may push away the first few times and take several feedings for them to "get the hang of it" and get comfortable with a bottle/nipple. It's nothing compared to a real momma cat! If a kitten refuses to take the nipple or won't suckle:

- You can try stroking the top of their head and back with a toothbrush or your finger, which mimics mom's tongue cleaning them.
- You can *very gently* squeeze a tiny drop of milk on their tongue to give them a taste of the formula.
- Try a different position – some kittens like to be a bit more upright
- Try a different nipple or maybe a syringe (we can give you syringes)
- Try the "burrito" method by wrapping the kitten in a blanket or towel, confining their arms, and hold them upright. This provides a comfortable constraint and allows the kitten to focus on suckling.
- Try a different milk temperature – some kittens like their milk warmer, some like it lukewarm
- Is the kitten cold? A kitten that is cold cannot process the milk – warm it up in a burrito and with a heat source and try feeding again after 30 minutes.
- If your kittens are not eating enough in one feeding, increase the frequency of feedings.
- If you're feeding multiple kittens, you'll have better luck with them eating the required amount if you feed them each several times, taking turns. Feed the first kitten until it stops nursing, feed the second, etc. Then go back to the first and repeat this round-robin. Usually, 2 or 3 rounds are enough.



**Stop feeding immediately**, if milk comes out of the kitten's nose or the kitten is coughing or sneezing. Please record the time and date and what happened in the diary. This information can be used for earlier detection of aspiration events. Gently pat them on the back and wait 30 minutes and try feeding again

**Kittens that are extra weak** may need to eat more frequently. Kittens that seem too weak to nurse can often be stimulated by rubbing some Karo syrup on their lips. If a kitten still refuses to nurse, and this happens beyond the first few "getting the hang of it" times, it can indicate illness. If the kitten does not respond in 10-12 hours please contact the foster office.

**Potty Time:** If your foster kittens are under 4 weeks old, you will need to help them eliminate, also called 'stimulation'. Normally, the mom cat licks the back end of her babies to stimulate the bowels and bladder.

- Before and after each feeding, gently rub the kitten on its lower abdomen, as well as the genitals and rectum, using a cotton ball, cotton pad, or soft tissues. Make sure you rub only enough to cause the kitten to eliminate; overstimulation will irritate the area.
- Kittens should urinate during each stimulation. They should defecate at least once a day.
- Stimulating before feeding helps them focus on eating (imagine you have to go and someone wants you to drink a tall glass of water!)
- Record all pee and poop in the kitten diary
- For constipated kittens, the formula can be diluted 3:1, 1-2 drops of olive oil added, warm baths, and tummy massages can be given to promote the production of stool.
- Grade the poop according to the [Fecal Score Chart](#) and note it in the diary - especially if it is soft
  - Kitten's poop should be firm and a yellowish color
  - Loose, yellowish stool is a sign of mild overfeeding
  - Greenish stool means food is passing too rapidly through the system or a bacterial infection
  - Grayish stool with a foul odor means inadequate digestion of formula = serious!
  - Blood in diarrhea, along with lethargy, vomiting, or loss of appetite = emergency!
- When should you contact the foster team by emailing [foster@phillypaws.org](mailto:foster@phillypaws.org)?
  - More than 24 hours without pee
  - More than 3 days without poop
  - Diarrhea for 2 days – sooner if the kitten has chronic liquid diarrhea, is not eating well, or is lethargic

## As they grow and wean!

**Litter Box:** Kittens begin litter box training right before they start weaning, and usually start trying to use a litter box around 3-4 weeks old, sometimes a little later if they are sick.

Watch Kitten Lady's [video about litter training!](#)

- Kittens do not have to be taught by either their mother or their human guardians to relieve themselves in soft, loose materials or to dig and bury their waste. This behavior is instinctive and kittens are born knowing how to do it.
- When choosing a litter box, make sure it is big enough for the litter but not so large that small kittens can't get into it.
- For kittens, use non-clumping or Yesterday's News litter and fill to a depth of two inches. Use Yesterday's News or non-clumping litter and a shallow litter box or cardboard box (eg. carton from wet cat food cans) and pee pads in case of accidents.
- Kittens tend to taste their litter and play in it which causes dust from clumping litter to solidify in their respiratory or digestive tracts. If litter is not available, shredded newspapers will do nicely.
- The litter box should be cleaned every day to keep it as clean as possible. Location is important, too!
- **Tips!** If a kitten is having accidents outside the box, try moving the litter pan, adding a second litter pan, try placing their feces in the box, try placing the kitten in the box to show them where it is, or try Dr. Elsey's Kitten Attract Litter.

**Weaning:** to accustom a kitten to food other than its mother's milk. At around 4 weeks of age, kittens develop back teeth, start teething, and can start learning to eat on their own or "weaning".

Watch Kitten Lady's [video about weaning!](#)

Keep in mind that some kittens take a bit longer, especially without a mom cat to show them how to eat solid food so **be patient with them and go at their pace**. You will know that a kitten is ready for the weaning process when it is biting its nipple often and forcefully, and able to lick formula from your finger.

1. Around 3 weeks old, you can help accustom kittens to the taste of meaty wet food by making a smoothie mixture. Blend a small amount of wet kitten pate into their bottle mixture using a blender or blender bottle. Increase the amount of wet food gradually. This mixture should be a smoothie-like texture that is still easy for the kittens to drink through a nipple or a no-needle plastic syringe if they are shredding the nipple with their teeth. You don't want them swallowing chunks of nipple! Miracle Nipples are really durable and you can cut the opening of the nipple a bit larger if needed as they get older. **Tip:** Make a big batch of smoothie mixture that you can pour into bottles as needed!
2. Around 4 weeks old, you can start the weaning process! To get started, make a slurry mixture by mixing wet kitten pate with formula. This mixture can be chunky.
  - a. Put a small amount on your finger and see if the kitten will lick it up or gently place a little in the kitten's mouth to help the kitten want more and to learn to use his mouth to eat from a plate.
  - b. Once they've mastered that, try offering them a flat dish of slurry. If they're not eating right from the dish, try luring their mouth to the dish with slurry on your finger.
  - c. Some kittens will get this right away and some kittens take days!
  - d. Another way to promote weaning is to leave out small dry kitten kibble soaked in formula or wet food to start and offer a "buffet" of different types of slurred wet food.
  - e. Keep bottle feeding while weaning to ensure that your kittens are getting enough to eat. Reduce bottle feeding as their solid food consumption increases.
3. Eventually, reduce the amount of formula added to canned kitten food until they are eating just food. It is not uncommon for weight gain to slow and minor diarrhea to occur during weaning. A small amount of canned pumpkin (not pie filling) added to their food will usually help with this. If you are using dry food, be sure to moisten it, because kittens can't chew dry food well until they are around 8 weeks old and we don't want them to choke!

**Mobility:** At the same time they begin teething, they will want to have more space to explore (such as a small playpen). Still, keep them separated from your pets and other foster litters since they have not had any vaccinations, are not tested for FIV/FeLV, and their immune system is still developing. You can start introducing toys too - jingly and crinkle toys are great! **Remember kittens are naturally very curious and should be kept in a confined space, so they do not get hurt.**

**Socialization:** Daily socialization sessions are important in shaping the kittens' future personality and emotional growth. Simple play and restraint exercises will familiarize a kitten with having its paws touched (front and back), mouth opened, and ears touched. Regular grooming sessions and body massages will prevent skin sensitivity or aversion to touch. It is vital to include petting, talking, and playing with foster kittens and cats in order for them to develop good "people skills." *Check out this great [guide to socializing kittens!](#)*

**Vaccine Boosters:** When a kitten reaches 1lbs (typically around 4 weeks old), we should begin their FVRCP vaccinations. This is given at our vaccine clinic and is vital to keeping kittens healthy and safe. Foster kittens will need booster shots of the **FVRCP vaccine every 2-4 weeks until they are 16 weeks old** and their Rabies vaccination at 3 lbs. If a kitten still has pending vaccines but is old enough for spay/neuter (2lbs) they can be adopted and the remaining vaccinations will be the responsibility of the adopter.

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## Almost ready for adoption!

**Adoption Process:** Around 7-8 weeks old, you can start looking for adoptive homes for the kittens. See our [Cat Foster Guide](#) for full details about the adoption process. If you only want to foster the kittens only until weaned (~4 weeks), please let us know so we can help coordinate new foster placement!

**FIV/FeLV Testing:** Kittens must be kept separate from other cats in the house until tested for FIV/FeLV. PAWS does not routinely test cats and kittens. In line with best practices, we recommend testing 60 days after the last possible exposure (typically the intake date). If you decide to introduce your resident cats to your foster cats at any point during fostering, you should have your foster tested at our clinic at a \$20 fee to the foster parent. For more info, read our [FIV & FeLV Testing Policy](#).

### Spay/Neuter Surgery:

- When the kittens are healthy and 1.5-2lbs, schedule their spay/neuter surgery appointments.
  - Grays Ferry Avenue: [gfclinic@phillypaws.org](mailto:gfclinic@phillypaws.org)
  - Grant Avenue: [neclinic@phillypaws.org](mailto:neclinic@phillypaws.org)
- Include each cat's A#, name, weight, gender, & color.
- Kittens younger than six months can have food up until midnight.
- Drop off for surgery is typically between 8-9 am and pick up is the same day at 4 pm.
- The kittens should get microchipped during the surgery
- Post Surgery:
  - Foster cats should have limited activity and limited use of stairs.
  - Do not allow them to lick or chew at stitches.
  - Male kittens heal pretty fast and will not need a cone.
  - Female will be required to wear an e-collar for a minimum of 10 days
  - Keep the incision dry and check daily for signs of infection.
  - Kittens hissing and aggression are normal for up to 48 hours after surgery due to the anesthesia. You can separate them if needed.
  - If you notice any redness, swelling, drainage from the incision site, lethargic behavior, or vomiting after 24 hours, please contact the foster office to see if you need to bring them in to be seen by a veterinarian.
  - Adopters can take the kittens home right after the surgery, but it's recommended that the foster give the kittens 2-3 days to recover their home.



## Emergency info & urgent symptoms to look out for!

It is important as a foster parent to be able to interpret changes in an animal's appearance, bodily functions, and behavior in order to detect illness.

**“Time Sensitive”, Not Emergencies:** Reasons to email us with “Time Sensitive” in the subject line, but not by emergency phone - *these should be handled within 24 hours!*

- If a kitten has diarrhea, little to no urine, or vomiting;
- Sudden change in energy level or behavior
- Not eating, weight loss - weigh your kittens at least once a day, optimally before each feeding
- Sneezing, coughing

**“URGENT” During Business Hours (9 am-5 pm):** If you have an emergency during business hours, please email [foster@phillypaws.org](mailto:foster@phillypaws.org) with “URGENT” in the subject line and we will advise you of the best course of action.

**After Hour True Emergencies Only** should call or text the emergency phone (267-258-8510). If a kitten is showing any of these serious symptoms, it is an emergency and they may be in danger of dying:

- Unable to lift up their head on their own, lethargic (they are not moving when you touch them)
- Unconsciousness, seizures, uneven pupil dilation, or fainting
- Open-mouth breathing, labored breathing, excessive panting, or incessant coughing
- Crackling/popping sounds when they breath
- Repeated vomiting of bile or blood
- Severe diarrhea accompanied with vomiting
- Pronounced limping or paralysis (mild limping is not an emergency and may just need rest)
- Pale gums: Gently push gums they should return to pink within 1-2 seconds
- Dehydration: gums that are tacky (sticky) to the touch, eyes look sunken in, skin tent does not return to normal position in 1-3 seconds (gently pinch the skin on the kitten's back to check skin tent)
- Excessively cold to the touch with little movement and will not warm up wrapped up with a heating pad.
- Fever (feels hot to the touch or above 104 degrees F on a rectal thermometer)
- A kitten has passed away in your care (bring their body back during operating hours and do not bury)

**While waiting for a response to an email or the emergency phone:**

- Attempt to syringe feed the kitten water or Pedialyte if dehydrated
- Give NutriCal to stabilize
- Try syringe feeding kitten instead of bottle feeding – but do not force it. Feed drop by drop.
- Keep kitten warm and comfortable
- If symptoms appear to be Fading Kitten Syndrome, start Fading Kitten Protocol (see below)

**Fading Kitten Syndrome** is not a disease, but rather a collection of symptoms that develop in neonatal kittens due to many possible underlying causes. Most often Fading Kitten Syndrome is escalated due to hypothermia (low body temperature) and hypoglycemia (low blood sugar), and correcting these can save the kitten. **If you notice these symptoms, contact the foster office and start the Fading Kitten Protocol immediately!**

- Extreme lethargy (unable to stand, hold head up, not responding when touched)
- Low body temp (feels cold to the touch or below 98 degrees F on a rectal thermometer)
- Increased respiratory effort (gasping for breath)
- Pale gums (white)
- Odd vocalizations (cries of pain)
- Dehydration
- Muscle wasting (loss of muscle tone in the face and body, causing the kitten to look gaunt or frail. The kitten may develop a triangular-looking face.)