

How Much Water Should a Cat Drink?

Famed veterinarian and author James Herriot has noted that “cats are connoisseurs of comfort.” When we think of comfort for our cats, items like soft beds and tasty treats come to mind. But we should also think about a clean full bowl of water. Hydration is an extremely important part of your cat’s overall health. Exactly how much water should a cat drink every day? How can you make sure your feline is getting enough water?

The amount of water consumption depends on a variety of factors, including the size of your cat, the time of year and whether your cat’s diet includes wet food or dry cat food only. If cats are given dry food only, they will require significantly more supplemental water to stay acceptably hydrated. Normally, a cat will require 2-4 ounces of fresh water in addition to its food. Dry food is only 10 percent water, while canned is approximately 80 percent water. So obviously your cat is going to drink a lot more water if you are providing dry food only.

How Can I Tell If My Cat Is Getting Enough Water?

There are a few simple signs that will give you a pretty good indication of your cat is staying hydrated:

- Skin elasticity. Gently pull the skin at the base of your cat’s neck (scruff). The skin should spring back when you release it. If it does not, your cat might not be getting enough water.
- A shiny coat without dry flakes is a sign of hydration
- Your cat should exhibit normal physical activity and not be overly lethargic
- Is your cat urinating 2-3 times per day? You can tell if this is happening by checking your cat’s litter box for medium-sized clumps.

What Can I Do To Encourage My Cat To Drink More Water?

You can lead a cat to water, but can you make him drink? What should you do if you think your cat is not drinking enough? Water is essential to your cat’s health and can even be instrumental in helping to prevent some severe health issues such as Feline Urological Syndrome. There are a few steps you can make to encourage kitty to stay hydrated:

- Sprinkle a little more water on top of your pet’s canned food. This is not recommended for dry food as it may cause it to spoil more rapidly.

- Use glass or pottery type water (and food) bowls. Sometimes plastic leaves a taste that cats don't like.
- Always make sure the water is fresh and clean. Refresh your cat's water bowl daily.
- Use filtered water instead of tap water. The latter can be heavily chlorinated or have too high a concentration of minerals.

It's very important to pay attention to your cat's "normal" water consumption and take note if that amount happens to change. Any significant increase or decrease in your cat's daily water intake could be a sign of illness. Drinking too much or too little water could be indicative of a urinary cystitis (bladder infection), tapeworm infestation, diabetes or hyperthyroidism. It's time for a trip to your local vet if you notice excessive changes in your cat's daily water intake.

Some Fast Facts About Feline Water Consumption

- Many cats, while not wanting to be completely immersed in water, are fascinated by running water. If you don't have a cat that likes to play with a dripping faucet or watch water being flushed down a toilet, you've probably seen a video of one on the Internet. Purchasing an automatic water fountain may be one way to get your cat to consume more water. Both Drinkmate and Petmate make drinking fountains for cats. They usually cost around \$60-\$70. Smaller continuous water fountains for cats can sometimes be found discounted on the web for around \$20-\$40. One example is the "Catit Fresh and Clear" small drinking fountain.
- Some cats don't like the taste of "hard" water which is high in concentrates of mineral salts. Try offering distilled or filtered water instead.
- It might be necessary to rinse your cat's water bowl a couple times a day during the warmer months of the year when bacteria can form quickly.
- Benjamin Franklin once noted in Poor Richard's almanac that "when the well is dry, we know the worth of water." It's not necessary to wait that long to know what it's worth for your cat or kitten. **Make sure that water bowl is filled to the brim with fresh clean water every day and you'll contribute greatly to your cat's health.**