

Tips and Tricks for Bottle Feeding

- Use warm rice sock propped around kitten when feeding. This simulates lying on mom while nursing. Warm rice sock for **20-30** seconds and make sure it is not hot before positioning kitten.



- Do not, under any circumstance, feed a kitten on his/her back. This will lead to aspiration pneumonia and could lead to death. Kittens should always be fed in a natural nursing position – tummy down and head gently and slightly tilted up





Fast Facts

Top Bottle Feeding Hints

1. Formula should be fresh: less than 24 hours old, preferably less than 12 hours old.
2. Formula should be the correct temperature (warm) – bottle nipple also.
3. Nipple opening should be large enough (use scissors) and appropriately sized for kitten's age (formula should drip out slowly when held upside down).
4. Loosen bottle cap slightly.
5. Place fingers lightly on cheeks and chin.
6. Feed in prone position, and do not force the formula into the kitten's mouth.
7. Assure that kittens are alert. Very small kittens are more likely to nurse when 'asleep,' but kittens older than 2 weeks need to be fully awake.
8. Burp kittens after feeding.
9. If medicating, give after feeding unless otherwise indicated (easier on the kitten's stomach).
10. Use toilet paper for stimulation.
11. Use a warm, damp washcloth to simulate mother's licking to clean several times a day, especially around the mouth and anal areas.
12. Keep accurate records – particularly of the kitten's weight, food intake and elimination habits.
13. Keep **ALL** supplies and the environment meticulously clean.
14. Formula can be used as a vehicle for supplements, (i.e. Nutri-Cal, L-lysine, BeneBac, FortiFlora, etc.), but **NOT** medications.
15. Patience, observation and determination are key.



Why Won't My Kitten Nurse?

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| 1. Cold or dehydrated (Do not feed until stable – warm and hydrated!) | 6. Not fully awake |
| 2. Not hungry, especially with new intakes of healthy kittens older than 2 weeks | 7. Nipple opening too small |
| 3. Formula/bottle/nipple too cold or hot | 8. Physical deformity (i.e. cleft palate, etc.) – should be seen during intake exam |
| 4. Formula bad (taste) | 9. Illness (i.e. URI, panleukopenia, etc.) – RED FLAG! |
| 5. Need to urinate/defecate | 10. Old enough to eat solid food |



Fast Facts

Kitten Feeding Chart

General feeding guidelines:

- Kittens are individuals, and feedings should be tailored to each specific situation.
- “Daily” means feedings evenly spaced over a 24-hour period.
- Avoid “homemade” formulas (only use in an emergency, over a very short term until a quality kitten milk replacer can be obtained).
- Do **not** use cow’s milk or confuse ‘Cat Milk’ with kitten milk replacement formula. ‘Cat Milk’ is meant as a treat for older cats and does not contain the nutrients necessary to support kittens.



Age in weeks	Weight	mL per day	Daily feedings
1	4 oz.	32 mL	6 - 8
2	7 oz.	56 mL	4 - 6
3	10 oz.	80 mL	3 - 4
4	13 oz.	104 mL	3
5	1 pound	128 mL	3
6+	Solids, may still nurse	Variable	3

FYI: 15 mL = approximately 3 teaspoons or ½ ounce

Kitten Bottle Feeding and Stomach Capacity Chart

Estimated Kitten Age (weeks)	Kitten Weight (lbs, oz)	Kitten Weight (grams)	Daily Caloric Requirement*	Amount of Formula Per Day (ml)**	Amount Per Feeding (ml)*	Approximate Number of Feedings Per Day****
< 1 week	2 oz	57 g	11 kcal	15 ml	2 ml	7
	3 oz	85 g	17 kcal	23 ml	3 ml	7
	4 oz	113 g	23 kcal	31 ml	5 ml	7
1 week	5 oz	142 g	28 kcal	38 ml	6 ml	7
	6 oz	170 g	34 kcal	46 ml	7 ml	7
	7 oz	198 g	40 kcal	54 ml	8 ml	7
	8 oz	227 g	45 kcal	61 ml	9 ml	7
	9 oz	255 g	51 kcal	69 ml	10 ml	7
2 weeks	10 oz	283 g	57 kcal	77 ml	11 ml	7
	11 oz	312 g	62 kcal	84 ml	12 ml	6-7
	12 oz	340 g	68 kcal	92 ml	14 ml	6-7
3 weeks*	13 oz	369 g	74 kcal	100 ml	15 ml	6
	14 oz	397 g	79 kcal	107 ml	16 ml	5
	15 oz	425 g	85 kcal	115 ml	17 ml	5
	16 oz (1 lb)	454 g	91 kcal	123 ml	18 ml	5
4 weeks*	1 lb, 1 oz	482 g	96 kcal	130 ml	19 ml	4
	1 lb, 2 oz	510 g	102 kcal	138 ml	20 ml	4
	1 lb, 3 oz	539 g	108 kcal	146 ml	22 ml	4
5 weeks*	1 lb, 4 oz	567 g	113 kcal	153 ml	23 ml	4

* The daily caloric requirement was calculated using 20 kcal/100 g body weight and the amount per feeding using 4 ml/100 g body weight. The energy requirement is ~20-26 kcal/100g body weight daily and the maximum comfortable stomach capacity is ~4 ml/100 g body weight.¹

** Concentration 0.74 kcal/ml. Most commercial kitten milk replacers in the US provide less than 1 kcal/ml (0.74 kcal/ml), acting to increase the volume of milk required to meet caloric needs. This can be problematic in terms of the number and size of feedings given relative to stomach capacity and more likely to result in gastrointestinal disturbances. This may also account for why bottle fed kittens grow slower than kittens that nurse off a mother.

*** As the kitten is adjusting well to the milk and the feeding volume, you may be able to increase the volume fed to help reduce the number of feedings per day. Be aware that exceeding the stomach capacity (amount per feeding) may put the kitten at risk of aspiration, vomiting, diarrhea, and gas build-up in the stomach and intestines.

* Kittens at this age (3 ½ - 5 weeks) are usually eating some solid food, decreasing the amount of milk replacer required to meet daily caloric requirements. This may result in less frequent milk feedings.

Cited reference:

¹Lawler, D. F. "Neonatal and pediatric care of the puppy and kitten." *Therogenology*, vol. 70, no.3, 2008, pp. 384-392.

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