

Getting cats to eat a new diet

Cats can be very reluctant when we try and introduce a new diet to them. They don't appreciate change, especially when the new food may have a different texture or taste. Here are Blue House's 10 top tips to get your cat to eat what it should!



1. **Slowly does it!** The single most important thing you can do to increase acceptance of a new food is to change over gradually. The change should be done over a minimum of 7 days, but some cats will need 3-4 weeks.
2. **Provide old and new.** There are 2 options – either start to mix small amounts of the new food in with the old, or provide 2 dishes (old and new) side by side.
3. **Use a suitable food dish.** When changing from dry to wet food, use a flat food dish (e.g. saucer) rather than a bowl so the cat's whiskers don't rub on the food dish.
4. **Not too cold!** Use fresh food at room temperature. Some cats may eat refrigerated food that has been warmed up, others will insist on a newly opened container.
5. **Texture and formulation.** Offer food with different textures (e.g. minced, pate, whole chunks) or formulas (dry or moist, raw or cooked). Some cats' preferences change with age or illness.
6. **Add flavour enhancers.** Low sodium chicken broth, tuna juice, oregano and brewer's yeast are some examples of flavour enhancers that can be used to increase palatability.
7. **Avoid stressful periods.** Ideally don't try and change a cat's food whilst in a cattery or hospitalised, as they may develop an aversion to the food.
8. **Start early.** If your cat has a condition such as kidney failure, the new diet should be started before the cat starts to feel sick (i.e. early on in the disease).
9. **Hunger.** For 'resistant-to-change' cats, you will need to use the normal sensation of hunger to help with the transition. For this reason, it is very important to stop free-feeding dry food. They are not going to try anything new if their bowl of junk food is in front of them all day.
10. On the other hand, **do not attempt to withhold food for long periods of time** (greater than 24 hours) with the hope that your cat will choose the new food. Allowing a cat to go without food - especially an overweight cat - for a long period of time (greater than 48 hours) can be quite dangerous and may result in hepatic lipidosis (fatty liver disease).

If all else fails, let us help you to find an alternative diet. Not all diets suit all cats, and some are just very stubborn!

