



## TIPS FOR ENCOURAGING WATER INTAKE IN CATS

As with many things, cats can be very meticulous in their drinking habits, and encouraging water intake can sometimes be tricky. However, increasing water intake can be desirable for some cats to assist in the management of certain medical conditions, such as Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) and Feline Idiopathic Cystitis (FIC). Here are a few tips to help encourage your cat to drink more.

### TYPE OF WATER BOWL

- Experiment with the types of bowl that you offer your cat.
- In general, cats prefer ceramic, glass or metal dishes to plastic ones which can taint the water. Some cats also find metal frightening due to the reflections in the bowl.
- Most cats prefer a wide, shallow bowl filled to the brim, so that they do not need to put their head inside the container to drink from it, as this can make them vulnerable to attack from a predator.
- Cats also do not usually like their whiskers to touch the sides of their water (or food) bowl.
- Some cats like drinking from tumblers (choose a non-breakable one if placing on a high-up surface).

### NUMBER OF WATER BOWLS

- Have several water bowls so that your cat does not need to go far to find one. As a desert-dwelling species, cats are naturally opportunistic drinkers, so having plenty of bowls around the home in areas where the cat visits frequently, can encourage a passing drink!
- Have at least one water bowl on each level of the home, so the cat does not need to go up and down stairs to find their water.
- If you have more than one cat, you need to provide enough resources for each individual or “social group” of cats - ideally **“one per cat or social group, plus one extra”**. This is to prevent fear and stress due to competition over vital resources.

### LOCATION OF WATER BOWLS

- Keep water bowls away from food bowls – cats prefer not to drink near their food (prey eaten near a water source in the wild could cause contamination).
- This means avoiding “double-feeders” (one side for food, and one for water). Your cat will drink more if food and water are offered in separate locations.
- Place bowls in a quiet location, away from doors that are heavily used or especially busy places. Bowls can also be placed up a height such as a window sill, where your cat can survey their surroundings for any potential threats, before the vulnerability of taking a drink!

### OTHER WATER SUPPLIES

- Consider running water sources as some cats like to drink from moving water (less chance of being contaminated).
- Water fountains are readily available in many designs, with ceramic and stainless-steel models now also available.



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- Other options include:
  - ✓ A dripping tap.
  - ✓ A shower tray or bath with a small amount of water in it.
  - ✓ Placing a ping-pong ball inside a large diameter bowl full of water – some cats will enjoy playing with this and it can stimulate drinking as well as helping to create some movement of the water which many cats like.

## DIFFERENT TYPES OF WATER

- Consider experimenting with different types of water to see if your cat has a preference. Many cats do not like heavily fluorinated water.
  - ✓ Tap water (as long as it's safe for human consumption).
  - ✓ Collected rainwater from containers placed in your garden – many cats prefer to drink from puddles and water sources in the garden if given a choice.
  - ✓ Mineral water.

## OTHER TASTY LIQUIDS

- Consider offering other liquids that your cat might find tasty.
- Water left over from poaching a piece of chicken or fish (allow to cool to room temperature before offering to your cat).
- Prawns, fish or meat liquidised in water to create a soup or broth.
- Liquid from a can of tuna in spring water (avoid brine as this contains a lot of salt).
- Liquid from a bag of frozen prawns which has been defrosted.
- If any particular liquid is found to be popular – consider freezing portions of these in an ice cube tray (for some cats, adding a cube of flavoured water to their normal bowl of water is enough to encourage drinking).

## LIQUIDS TO AVOID

- Salty liquids such as brine
- Milk – if your cat has kidney disease, this is not ideal due to the high amount of phosphate which can have a detrimental effect on kidney function. Cow's milk also cannot be fully digested by cats and can cause diarrhoea.
- Anything containing onions or onion powder, such as stock cubes (onions are toxic to cats).

## FURTHER TIPS

- Offer water and other liquids at room temperature where possible, as flavour is reduced in cold liquids.
- Feed a wet diet (cans or pouches) rather than a dry diet (check with your vet first before changing your cat's diet).
- Adding extra water to wet food can also help increase water intake – add water at room temperature.
- If your cat will only eat dry food, still try adding water to their food, as some cats will eat it. Add the water and leave it for a short period until the biscuits swell, before offering to your cat.
- Start by adding just a small quantity of water such as a dessert spoonful, and gradually increase this over a period of several days if your cat is happy to eat their watered-down food.

### REMEMBER:

- **Be persistent**
- **Be gradual in making changes – cats do not like sudden changes to their food or water**
- **Think like a cat would do in the wild – they still retain these natural instincts!**
- **Whatever you can do will make a difference for your cat!**

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