

## How to get your kitty to the vet stress free

### Signs of a stressed cat

- Frozen in place
- Tail and feet wrapped tightly around the body
- Dilated pupils
- Hissing/spitting/swatting
- Not using the litter box
- Hiding
- Excessive vocalization
- Excessive grooming



**Step 1: The carrier.** Most cats have anxiety about the carrier, this is natural, it's a claustrophobic space that smells funny and kind of looks like a coffin sized prison cell. Despite having natural anxieties about a carrier, it is still recommended as the safest method of travel. We do not recommend cats be carried in arms or on a leash when visiting the veterinary hospital.



**Carriers that are desirable:** One that fits the cat and has extra space for him/her to turn around. Ones that have a top that can come off easily or that open completely up on one side.

**Carriers to avoid:** Too small for the cat. Cannot easily come apart and have only one exit on the side through a small door, soft carriers that collapse onto the cat.

### Things to do:

- Get the carrier out of storage at least a week in advance and place it in a central room where the family and cat go to relax.
- Remove the door from the carrier. Make sure it is clean and spray or wipe down with calming pheromones.
- Place a familiar object in it such as a blanket or t-shirt that smells like the cat's favorite person.
- Put some treats in the carrier and/or feed the cat near or in the carrier.
- Ignore it.

**Things NOT to do:** Get the carrier out right before its time to go. Try to force the cat into the carrier. Use a dirty carrier. Yell or discipline the cat when they try to resist going into the carrier. Handle the carrier in a manner that swings the cat around and bumps him/her into things.

## Step 2: Preparations.

- 1) About 5 days before travel give 1 zylkene supplement per day. This is an all-natural calming supplement to help relax the cat.
- 2) The night before travel give the gabapentin mixed in a yummy treat/food.

0 – 5# cat	½ capsule
5.1-10# cat	1 capsule
+10# cat	2 capsules

- 3) About 2 -3 hours before travel give a second dose of gabapentin.
- 4) About an hour before travel wipe or spray the carrier down with calming pheromones.

**Step 3: Travel.** The car ride can be stressful because of the vibrations, noise and smells and some cats get car sick.

### Things to do:

- Put some treats in the carrier and calmly coax the cat into the carrier and close the door.
- Make sure the vehicle is a desirable temperature before getting in and turn the music off or put soft calm music on.
- Cover the carrier with a towel if the cat seems stressed. This helps him/her feel safe.
- Carry the carrier with stability and do not jostle the cat around too much.
- Place the carrier in a stable spot in the vehicle so it doesn't tip, slide or fall.

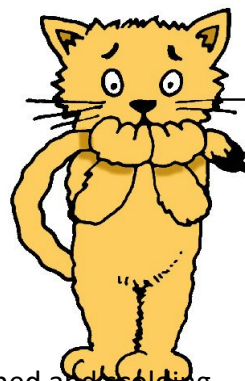
**Things NOT to do:** Play loud music. Roll the windows down while going down the road. Placing the carrier in an area that causes it to jostle around.

**Step 4: Arrival.** The veterinary clinic will sound and smell different and will automatically induce a stress response.

### Things to do:

- Handle the carrier with stability and do not jostle the cat around too much.
- Go to the designated waiting area for cats to help reduce interspecies interactions which will stress the cat more.
- Upon entering the exam room place the carrier on the floor out of the way and open the door to allow the cat to come out at his/her leisure.

**Things NOT to do:** Force the cat to come out of the carrier. Scold or scruff the cat for any reason. Many cats will hiss and spit when they are frightened and scolding them will only enforce their anxiety and fears. Let the veterinary professionals handle the cat in these situations as they are trained to do so in safe and lower stress methods.



**Step 5: Going Home.** Most cats are anxious to return to the carrier when they are at the veterinary clinic so coaxing them back into the carrier is usually easier than when they were at home. However, there are still some that are difficult to place back in the carrier. It is best in these situations to allow the veterinary staff to put the cat back in the carrier as they are trained to do so in a safe and lower stress manner. Returning home should follow the same recommendations for travel as when coming to the veterinary clinic.

Once home the cat may still be frightened and now the cat will smell funny to other members of the house hold. It is important to let the cat come out of the carrier on his/her own time and without being disturbed by others in the house: feline, canine, human or other. Many cats will want to hide for a few hours or maybe a few days. The anxiety supplements and medications can continue to be given for a day or two if needed until the cat calms back down and resumes normal routine.

It is important to follow the veterinarian's instructions or recommendations on follow up care of medical conditions. If any of the following signs are noted in your cat after coming home please alert the veterinarian.

- Not eating, Lethargy, Vomiting, Abnormal behavior

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