



FREE GUIDE

The senior cat care guide

Reading the signs cats are good at hiding

Introduction

Cats are exceptionally good at masking discomfort — an evolutionary holdover from being both predator and prey — which means aging-related problems often show up later and more subtly than in dogs. This guide covers what to actually watch for in a senior cat (generally 10-11+) and how to adjust their care as they age.

Why subtle signs matter more in cats

A cat that's clearly limping or crying out is already showing significant discomfort — cats more often show pain through small behavior shifts: sleeping in new, lower-effort locations, grooming less (or overgrooming one spot), hesitating before a jump they used to make easily, or being less social. These are easy to miss if you're only watching for obvious limping.

Common senior-cat conditions worth knowing about

Kidney disease, hyperthyroidism, and arthritis are all common in older cats and all have subtle early signs — increased thirst/urination (kidney disease), weight loss despite a normal or increased appetite (hyperthyroidism), and reduced jumping or stiffness after rest (arthritis, which shows up in an estimated 60%+ of cats over 6, far more than owners typically realize). None of these are things to self-diagnose, but all are worth mentioning specifically at a vet visit.

Adjusting the home for an aging cat

Small, low-effort changes help more than they might seem to: a litter box with lower sides (easier to step into with stiff joints), litter boxes on every floor of a multi-story home so a painful trip downstairs isn't the only option, steps or ramps to favorite high perches, and a warm, easily accessible resting spot.

- Low-sided litter box, and one per floor in multi-story homes
- Steps or ramps to favorite windowsills or perches
- Warm, soft, easily accessible bedding
- Food and water bowls that don't require a big reach or jump
- Consistent daily routine — sudden changes are harder to adapt to with age

Vet visit frequency

Twice-yearly vet visits are commonly recommended for senior cats, often including bloodwork to catch kidney and thyroid issues before they're advanced — these conditions are far more manageable when caught early, and bloodwork frequently catches them before any home-visible symptoms appear.

Senior cat care checklist

- ☐ Watching for subtle signs (sleeping spot changes, grooming changes, jump hesitation), not just obvious limping
- ☐ Aware of common senior conditions (kidney disease, hyperthyroidism, arthritis) and their early signs
- ☐ Low-sided litter box available, with one per floor in multi-story homes
- ☐ Steps or ramps added to favorite high perches if jumping has become harder
- ☐ Moved to (or discussed) twice-yearly vet visits, ideally including bloodwork
- ☐ Consistent daily routine maintained as much as possible

Summary

Cats hide discomfort well, so senior cat care is mostly about watching for subtle shifts and catching common conditions early with regular bloodwork — not waiting for obvious symptoms.

This guide is for general education only and is not a substitute for advice from a certified trainer, veterinarian, or veterinary behaviorist. If you're seeing signs of distress, aggression, or a sudden change in behavior, please consult a professional who can assess your pet directly.