



# HOW TO TRANSITION A CAT TO A NEW FOOD (OF THE SAME FORM)

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## THE ISSUE

Because our bodies are used to variety in our diets we transition from one meal to the next without much thought. But our cats often have far less variety in their diets and transitioning from one food to another can create upsets. Especially if your cat has been eating the same thing for a long time, its body is in balance with its current diet, and it will take time for her to achieve a new balance with a new diet. Transitioning her gradually reduces the disruption of the intestinal bacteria and the irritation of the digestive tissues that frequently result from rapid diet changes. The guidelines below are useful when transitioning a cat between two diets of the same form (from one kibble to a different kibble, for example). If you're transitioning a cat from one form to a different form (from kibble to raw, for example), ask us for more information about that specific transition form.

## WHEN TO CONTACT YOUR VETERINARIAN

If your cat refuses to eat for more than 36 hours, contact your veterinarian. Extended fasting can lead to hepatic lipidosis (fatty liver disease), a serious and potentially life-threatening condition. If the diet transition leads to vomiting that continues for 24 hours after you stop feeding or begins again after you reintroduce food, contact your veterinarian.

## THE SOLUTION

Almost all cats do well with gradual diet transitions, but if your cat refuses to eat or develops vomiting, diarrhea, excess gas or constipation, you may be trying to transition her too quickly. If this happens, stop the transition and withhold food for 24 hours. After 24 hours, begin feeding frequent, small meals of her original diet. If all symptoms cease and she appears to be back to normal, you can re-start the transition a few days later, but with a more gradual approach. If the transition leads to vomiting that continues for 24 hours, contact your veterinarian.

### 1 Gradually transition to the new diet

- **Transitioning from one diet to another should take at least 7 days**—and it's fine to make the transition more gradual still. Mix the old and the new diets together as you gradually decrease the amount of old food and increase the amount of new.

Normal Transition Schedule

	Days 1-2	Days 3-4	Days 5-6	Day 7
OLD Diet	75%	50%	25%	
NEW Diet	25%	50%	75%	100%

- **Transitioning to a diet that's higher in fat takes longer.** If the fat level of the new diet is more than three percentage points (based on dry matter) higher than the fat level of your cat's current diet, your cat's pancreas will need much longer to increase its production of enzymes and enable your cat to safely make the transition.

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Mud Bay and its staff strive to help dog and cat owners improve the health of their animals and to increase the happiness owners experience in caring for their animals by providing natural foods, well-made supplies and useful information. Mud Bay and its staff do not diagnose or treat specific conditions, and the information provided by Mud Bay's staff, publications, website and other media are not substitutes for treatment by a veterinarian. A great vet is an invaluable resource, and we recommend that owners discuss diet and other changes in the care of their animals with theirs.

## Schedule for Transitioning to a Diet that's higher in Fat

	Day 1-14	Day 15-28	Day 29-42	Day 43
OLD Diet	75%	50%	25%	
NEW Diet	25%	50%	75%	100%

### **2 Support your cat's digestive health through the transition**

For many cats, a gradual approach is sufficient to ensure a successful transition to a new food. But some cats require—and almost every cat will benefit from—supplementation that strengthens its digestive health during the transition.

- **Supplement with prebiotics (a few days before starting the transition, if possible).** Prebiotics feed the good bacteria already in your cat's digestive tract. Prebiotics include fructooligosaccharides (FOS), inulin, oligofructose, chicory root, dandelion, burdock, wild yam, jicama, agave, and garlic.
- **Supplement with digestive enzymes.** Digestive enzyme supplements help the body digest food and are especially helpful to reduce the work load on the pancreas. Look for products with protease, amylase, cellulase or lipase.

### **3 What if your cat refuses to eat the new food?**

Cats can be very particular about what they will and won't eat, but with persistence it's almost always possible to find a variety of food options for a particular cat. The key is identifying what palatability triggers an individual cat has. Some cats strongly prefer diets that are high in protein—95%-meat wet diets may work with these cats. Some cats are motivated by smell—diets made with fish or warming the food before serving may appeal to these cats. Other cats focus on texture—trying different sizes and shapes of kibble or trying cans of all different styles (pate, morsels, cuts) usually leads to finding options that these cats will happily eat.

### **RESULTS**

Gradual transitions almost always lead to success. If you don't succeed the first time, stop, take a break, let your cat regain balance with her diet, support your cat's digestive system with supplements and then try again more gradually. If your cat's tummy becomes upset during the transition, read Mud Bay's *How to Calm a Cat's Stomach*.

### **STILL HAVE QUESTIONS?**

Mud Bay staffers are specifically trained to help owners transition their cats to new foods. If you need more help or information, please let us know.

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