



## HOW TO TRANSITION CATS TO WET FOODS

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### THE ISSUE

High caliber, natural wet cat foods are higher in moisture, less processed, richer in high quality meat and closer to the natural diet of cats than kibble foods. Cats that eat wet foods have a higher average total moisture intake than cats that eat nothing but kibble, and higher moisture intake in cats is associated with lower levels of Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease. Owners who transition their cats from kibble to wet diets generally observe less shedding and shinier, healthier coats as well as a better disposition within a few weeks of making the transition.

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. These are guidelines to follow when transitioning your cat from kibbles to a wet diet, but the similar approaches can be used in transitioning a cat from raw to wet food.

### 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 wet food

- **The transition should take at least a week.** Transitioning from one diet to another should take at least 7 days—and it's fine to make the transition more gradual still.

**Transition Schedule**

	Days 1-2	Days 3-4	Days 5-6	Day 7
KIBBLE	75%	50%	25%	
WET FOOD	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 higher (based on dry matter) 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. Double (or triple) the length of each stage in the transition schedule above.
- **Start by putting kibble and wet food next to each other** in a bowl or on a plate. Use the proportions outlined above. If your cat doesn't eat the wet food, try stirring kibble and wet food together.

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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.

## **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 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 wet cat food?**

Kibble cat foods can be very palatable because they're sprayed with palatability enhancers after extrusion. Without these palatability enhancers most cats would not eat kibble, and cats can develop strong preferences for the palatability enhancers of the kibbles they've eaten for a long time. Palatability enhancers make the transition from dry to wet harder, but with patience and the right techniques, most owners can successfully transition their cats from kibble to wet food.

- **End free feeding.** If your cat is a free feeder, begin by establishing two or three meals per day. Meals should be at the same time every day, and you should provide a measured amount of food.
- **Limit her time with kibble.** Limit your cat's time with kibble to 20 minutes two or three times per day. Offer a small amount of wet food at the same time. After 20 minutes, take away the remaining kibble, but leave the wet food out. Gradually reduce the amount of dry being fed.
- **Find the can that pulls your cat's palatability trigger.** Different cats have different palatability triggers. 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—try cans of all different styles (Pate, Morsels, Cuts). If you try a wide variety of flavors and textures, you'll almost certainly find some your cat will eat.
- **Add a healthy, tasty topper.** Find a topper that your cat is so crazy for that she'll eat the wet food along with the topper. In addition to toppers made for this purpose, you can use freeze dried foods, catnip or her favorite dry diet crushed into a powder.
- **Switch to a low carb dry diet first.** If you have a very stubborn kibble eater, you might try transitioning first to a low carbohydrate dry diet. After a month on the low carb kibble, re-start the transition to wet food.

## **RESULTS**

Gradual transitions to wet cat food 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.

## **STILL HAVE QUESTIONS?**

Mud Bay staffers are specifically trained to help owners transition their cats to wet foods. Muddies can also help you find the products that match the recommendations on this sheet, so if you need more help or information, please let us know.

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