

How to keep your cat fit, healthy and happy.

Try these 10 simple exercises from The Animal Medical Center's Rehabilitation and Fitness Service and see the results they can bring to both you and your pet.



Photos: Joshua Kessler

1. Belly Rub.

With your cat laying on his/her back, gently rub his/her belly. With luck, the cat will shift its weight from side to side, strengthening the core muscles.

2. Beg with weight shift - core strength.

A) Encourage your cat to stand on his/her hind limbs using a treat or toy as motivation. Great for core conditioning. Using a healthy treat, lure the cat's head up as far as it will go and hold that position for a few seconds.

B) To make this exercise more challenging, move the treat/toy side to side slowly to make the cat sway in a controlled fashion. Or have the cat stand on a cushion.



3. Bootie on the paw – improves weight bearing

A) Place a bootie or hair scrunchie on your pet's paw.

B) Your cat will most likely shake the paw to get the scrunchie/bootie off its leg. Repeat with all four legs.

4. Contra lateral limb lifts.

While your cat is standing, lift his/her left front and right hind leg. Hold this position for a few seconds. Repeat on the opposite side. This exercise strengthens the core.





5. Weight

Keeping your cat slim will reduce the stress on joints.



6. Rock On

Strengthens legs, coordination, flexibility and proprioception. Have your cat walk over uneven surfaces such as cushions, pillows, bed, a balance trainer, or foam mat. The cat will automatically shift his/her weight to correct balance with every motion.



7. Kneading

Kneading the cat, which involves gently rolling and pinching the skin, stimulates the skin and hair coat. It also increases circulation and flow.



8. Wheelbarrow

This exercise strengthens the hind and/or front limbs. To strengthen the front limbs, lift the cat under the abdomen so rear legs are off the ground. DO NOT lift with the legs. Begin with a stationary position. Progress to moving forward/backward as able. To strengthen the hind limbs, lift the abdomen so that the front legs are off the ground.



9. Loving on the couch/chair

This improves rear leg weight bearing/strength, range of motion, and hip extension. While sitting on a chair or couch, have your cat's back legs on the floor and lift the front legs up on a cushion or two (placed on the ground). Pet your cat so it stays in this position.



10. Happy butt rub dance

Vigorously scratch the top of you cat's rear end. Some cats find this stimulating and will shift their weight from side to side.



The facility is especially recommended for companion animals that are overweight, arthritic, elderly or even highly athletic.



Deirdre Chiamonte, DVM, DACVIM (at left) and Renee Schumway, LVT, CCRP formulate specialized fitness programs for pets.

The AMC's Rehabilitation and Fitness Service

The only facility of its kind in New York City

Our new, state-of-the-art suite for companion animals has been fully equipped with underwater- and land-based treadmills, a hydrotherapy tub and much, much more. In addition, our staff will be happy to formulate a specialized program for your pet, including diet and home exercise recommendations.

These services can be particularly beneficial to pets that are:

- Elderly
- Arthritic
- Suffering from endocrine diseases such as diabetes, Cushings, hypothyroid, and others
- Neurologically impaired
- Overweight
- Athletic

To speak directly to The Rehabilitation and Fitness Service or to make an appointment, call (212) 329-8610.

Contact Information

To set up an appointment at
The Animal Medical Center,
call (212) 838-7053, from 9AM to 10PM,
seven days a week.

To speak directly to
The AMC's Rehabilitation and Fitness Service,
call (212) 329-8610.

In case of emergency, bring your pet directly
to The Animal Medical Center.
Your pet will be examined and cared for by
one of our veterinarians.

If you are a veterinarian making a referral, call
The Referral Office at
(212) 329-8890 or (212) 329-8758.

For general information, call (212) 838-8100
or log on to: www.amcny.org

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