



Cats



## How to Prepare Your Cat for a Low Stress Handling® Blood Draw Visit

June 23, 2022 (published)

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Veterinary visits can be stressful for everyone, especially cats. Using the “less-is-more” approach, Low Stress Handling® Principles of Handling provides an opportunity for you to help your veterinarian perform a safer and more thorough physical exam along with any necessary diagnostics (blood draws, radiographs, ultrasound) needed to diagnose and treat your cat appropriately.

### These Principles of Handling include:

#### Greetings

- Avoid staring and direct approach.
- Move calmly and speak in quiet tones.
- Do not invade personal space. Always invite your cat into your space.
- Use distractions and rewards like food, brushing, and play.

#### The Carrier

- Carry the carrier from the bottom, not the handle: This allows your cat to feel more stable and minimizes back and forth movement, which reduces nausea and discomfort while also decreasing the risk of the carrier breaking and your cat getting loose.
- Cover the carrier with a [pheromone](#)-infused towel.
- Always elevate the carrier off the floor in the waiting room.
- Place the carrier on the table or floor in the exam room.
- Do not dump, tip, or shake the carrier.
- Open the door and allow an opportunity for your cat to exit on their own.
- Use treats and/or toys to lure the cat out of the carrier.
- If your cat does not come out of the carrier on their own, remove the lid before gently lifting your cat out of the carrier.

#### Comfortable Environment

- Perform the examination where your cat is most comfortable (owner's lap, cat carrier).
- Have everything already in the room needed for the visit (blood collection kit, vaccinations, equipment for examination, etc.) before starting.
- Do not continually enter and exit the room.
- Be mindful of sights, smells, and sounds (i.e., avoid barking dogs) that may cause distress.

### Use Appropriate or Minimal Restraint

- Always support your cat well and have your hands, arms, and body positioned appropriately so your cat will not feel as if they will fall or are off-balance.
- Adjust your handling based on each cat and their individual response to restraint.
- Be mindful of painful joints and temperature changes (i.e., cold stainless-steel tables)
- Avoid prolonged struggling. More than 1-2 seconds or repeated handling adjustments, consider pre-visit medications or sedation depending on what "needs" to be done that day.
- Avoid unnatural, uncomfortable, or painful positions when possible.
- Do not reposition the cat by pulling on legs, ears, tail, skin, or fur.

### Body Language

- Assess body language and adjust handling techniques based on the animal's individual preference.
- Assess yourself. Our behavior and body language affect the patient's emotional state.
- Less is often more.

### Towel restraint

- There are 6 different types of [towel wraps](#).
- Each towel restraint method requires practice and patience before use.
- Different wraps can be used for various procedures including blood collection, subcutaneous fluid administration, catheter placement, and injections.

Thoughtful changes in the hospital set-up along with a more individualized handling and restraint plan can go a long way in providing a more positive experience at the veterinary hospital for both you and your cat.

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