

*Catawba Animal Clinic
2247 India Hook Road
Rock Hill, SC 29732
803-366-8188*

Healthy Kitten Play: Preventing the Feline Terrorist

Young kittens are serious about play. Feline play trains them as hunters and helps develop social skills. However, it is easy for kittens to get carried away and hurt their human friends.

Kitten play typically involves elements of exploration, investigation, and predation such as stalking, chasing, attacking, catching, and biting. Most kittens engage their fellow felines in rough-and-tumble play so make sure that the play target is not an older cat that cannot tolerate the young cat's playful behavior.

When another suitable feline playmate is not available, a nearby family member becomes the next-best target. Teasing a small kitten with your fingers and toes may seem like fun, but this will quickly change as the pet grows older and the bites become harder, so take an early stand and teach the kitten the appropriate behavior.

Playful interaction with a kitten should involve tossing or dangling toys for it to chase and catch; the more vigorous the interaction, the better. This directs the attacks away from you. Keep your kitten so busy and worn out that that he doesn't even think about going after you or creating havoc in your house. Stock up on all types of fun toys that can be purchased from a pet store or made at home. Tossed ping-pong balls, tennis balls, soft rubber balls or crumpled paper can provide hours of entertainment. A short fishing rod is great for casting and reeling in small rubber or feather toys, and kitty treats or small kibbles of food can be tossed for the kitten to pounce on, bat around and eat. A few of these kibbles can also be strategically placed in different play areas for the kitten to find throughout the day, which provides surprise entertainment. Remember that play initiated by the kitten toward you should always be redirected toward appropriate toys, keeping you in charge of playtime.