



PAWS Chicago is committed to continuing our mission to reduce the overpopulation of animals in our city, which increases during warmer months (kitten season!). Cats can get pregnant every 62 days and usually give birth to 4-5 kittens per litter. More unwanted litters means more lives at risk. Thank you for helping homeless animals and keeping newborn kittens safe!

## I found kittens outdoors. What do I do?

### WATCH AND WAIT TO DETERMINE IF THERE IS A MOTHER CAT

**Resist the urge to pick up the kittens!** The mother cat may be off hunting, even for a couple hours. You might not see her right away. If you move the kittens, she may not find them again. The kittens' best chance of survival is with their mom, so the most important thing you can do is to see if mom comes back. Stay far back (at least 30 feet), as you could be scaring mom off if she sees you.

**In the meantime...** You can determine their age using the chart below. If the kittens are under four weeks, they are still drinking milk from mom. In this case, their absolute best chance of survival is with the mom to nurse.

### IF MOMMA COMES BACK...

Great! If the area is relatively safe, leave the mom and babies where they are until they are about 6 weeks old or weaned. You can offer shelter and regular food to mom to keep them safe.

For the best chance of socialization for adoption, take the kittens away at six weeks. If you can, foster them until they are ready for adoption. Kittens can get their first round of vaccines at six weeks and will prepare them for adoption at eight weeks. For information on relinquishing the kittens to PAWS Chicago, [please contact our intake department](#).

**For momma cat...** [Get her spayed!](#) Female cats can become pregnant even while nursing a litter. Spaying is recommended when the kittens are around six weeks old so there is less probability of the kittens interfering with the spay incision while it's healing.

**If mom is friendly...** Friendly moms can also be considered for adoption [through our intake department](#) along with their kittens. You may also want to keep her yourself!

**If mom is feral...** Feral cats are happiest when they are returned to where they came from after spay/neuter, as long as there is no immediate danger. [You may need to trap mom through trap-neuter-return](#) if you cannot handle her to get her spayed. [Consider becoming a caretaker for her.](#)

### IF MOMMA DOESN'T COME BACK...

If you have determined the mother is not coming back, you may rescue the kittens. Use the age chart to determine what they will need. If the kittens are less than four weeks old, they will need to be bottle fed. Bottle-feeding neonatal kittens requires feeding each kitten with Kitten Milk Replacer (KMR) every two to six hours (depending on age) around the clock, day and night. They also need body temperature monitoring, and help eliminating and defecating in the form of genital stimulation after each meal, as mom cat would do. Because of the intense round-the-clock care, neonatal kittens most often cannot stay in shelters as they are not staffed overnight. Consider fostering these kittens until they are old enough to eat on their own. [Directions on bottle feeding can be found here.](#) When the kittens are eating solid food on their own, they are ready to be taken to PAWS Chicago for adoption or to be rehomed! If possible, [be sure to get them spayed/neutered before rehoming.](#)

Newborn kittens are completely helpless! Their eyes are closed and their ears are folded. Newborns cannot stand, regulate their body temperature, eat, or eliminate on their own – until about 4 weeks. They rely on mom for all of this and need round the clock care.

The benchmarks below will help determine a kitten's age from 1 to 8 weeks and the type of care they need at each stage.



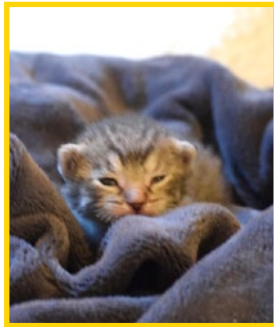
## 1 Week

At 7 days, ears start to unfold and eyes may open. Can lift head.



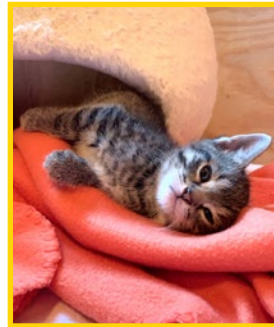
## 5 Weeks

Rough and tumble – it's playtime! Lots of energy. Interaction with people is crucial at this age for long term socialization.



## 2 Weeks

Eyes open! Eyes are blue. Taking wobbly steps.



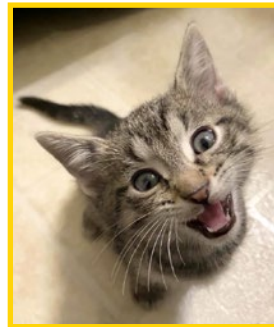
## 6 Weeks

Uses litterbox and can eat cat food on own. Still may nurse off mom a bit. Can receive first vaccines.



## 3 Weeks

Ears perk up! Start to play with siblings. Can offer litter box and wet food. Can begin to identify gender.



## 7 Weeks

Transitioning to adult eye color – bye bye blue eyes! Almost fully weaned. Introduction to environment (people, pets) is important.



## 4 Weeks

Canine teeth emerging, confidently playing with siblings and walking.



## 8 Weeks

Should weigh 2 lbs. Able to spayed or neutered. Can be placed in new home.