



CATS

FEAR FREE VISITS

PICKING A CARRIER



Your cat's fear free journey begins with their carrier

Here are some tips for choosing a carrier for your cat, and getting them used to the carrier ahead of their vet visit.

Hard plastic or fabric?

In general, we recommend **hard plastic carriers** over soft fabric carriers. Most cats are less stressed upon arriving at the clinic, when they have traveled in a rigid carrier rather than a floppy fabric carrier. **Our favourite carriers are hard plastic**, with either screws or clips that allow the top to be removed easily.

How do I get my cat to accept the carrier?

- **Leave the carrier out in the open in your living space** - either as a permanent fixture, or for 1-2 weeks before your appointment. If your carrier lives in storage, smells unfamiliar, and only ever comes out right before vet visits, your cat will likely go into hiding upon seeing it!
- **Feeding treats and putting comfortable bedding inside** will entice your cat to check it out on their own terms.
- **Spraying the carrier with Feliway**, a calming pheromone for cats, can also help! This can be done as you try to acclimate your cat to the carrier, and before travel. Wait 10 minutes after using the spray before trying to put your cat inside.

Consider Fear Free medication!

We have cats too, and we know traveling with them can be stressful! Ask us about Fear Free medication to make the experience much easier.



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TRAVEL WITH LESS STRESS

I can't get my cat into the carrier!

If you haven't already, check out the video on our website on how to get your cat into a carrier, as well as our handout about picking a carrier and getting your cat accustomed to it!

- **Ask us about Fear Free meds, to make this whole process easier!**
- **Withhold breakfast**, and then **offer food and treats inside their carrier** when it's time to travel. This is much more likely to work if your cat is already hungry!
- If you have to pick up your cat and put them in, you are more likely to be successful if you **do not move or touch the carrier before trying to pick them up**. For flighty cats, this can signal that you're about to grab them!
- **Putting your cat in bum first is helpful**. Holding their back feet can make it less likely they spread their feet out to resist going into the front door.
- If you have a helper, ask them to **tilt the carrier vertically and hold the door open**, and then it's much easier for you to put them in bum first! Check out our video for more instruction.

Ways to reduce stress once your cat is in the carrier

If possible, we recommend carrying the carrier by it's bottom or along the middle seam (if it is a plastic carrier), rather than the handle at the top. **This prevents your cat from swinging and sliding side-to-side.** **Covering the carrier with a towel can help**, especially if this towel is sprayed with Feliway (calming cat pheromone) first!