

Starting cats on a raw meaty bones diet

Kittens and some adult cats instinctively recognise wholesome natural food the first time it's offered to them. Unfortunately the great majority of adult cats when first started on a [raw meaty bones diet](#) tend to be less than enthusiastic and need some coaxing.

Making the change can be a tricky business and we need to get a good grasp of the task at hand. Do you rattle the packet before pouring the fishy pellets into a bowl? What do you say to Kitty as she comes running? Maybe your feline seldom stirs except to nibble on the kibble sitting in the bowl 24 hours per day? Maybe the furry feline entwined round your legs signals the need for you to open the refrigerator and, with a tap on the tin, serve up the pungent canned food.

Feeding rituals differ, but timing, taste, texture, sight, sound and smell all play a part. Kitty is quite likely addicted to these powerful stimuli and you, as the carer, have likely grown accustomed to the ways that worked best for you. You have literally fed the addiction.

Now imagine the future with your lithe feline crouched low as she tucks into chicken necks, quail and whole raw fish. That's the successful end point. (See [photos and videos](#).) If your cat is young and healthy you can start making the change. However, if your cat is overweight, suffers from dental or other medical problems, then you will likely first need to consult your vet before you embark on the diet changes.

Useful change techniques

Work with your cat, not with her addiction. Stopping 24 hour access to food is the essential first step. Instead, start a once-a-day routine at, say, 6.00 p.m. Kitty's biological clock will soon synchronise and her anatomy, physiology and behaviour will all line up, on time, in the kitchen.

Once the new routine is established the switch to natural food can get underway.

There are several 'tricks' either singly or in combination that should help.

Hungry cats are always more willing to sniff, lick and ultimately eat new foods. So *reduce* the amount of commercial canned or dry food offered. (Do not fast or starve your cat for more than 24 hours.)

Settle on one meat, for instance chicken, that you wish your cat to become accustomed to.

Taste and texture of raw meat are the two things you need your cat to accept. (Gnawing on bones comes later.) So chop a few strips of chicken meat and cover with commercial food in a bowl.

Over successive days feed less commercial food and more raw meat.

When raw meat is accepted try increasing the size of the pieces until chicken necks and wings replace the chopped chicken.

Other tricks involve slightly searing the meat in a pan or under the grill. You can try mixing canned fish juices with the meat or dusting it with powdered kibble.

Slitting the skin and making deep cuts into the meat of chicken wings or drumsticks and stuffing canned food inside may tempt your finicky feline. You can try tying a chicken wing on a string and playing a game of pounce and catch.

If you own several cats they can compete with and learn from each other.

Perseverance pays and ten days is usually sufficient time to switch the diet of a difficult cat. It's best to let your cat become an accomplished chicken eater before introducing quail, rabbit, fish, day old chicks or similar food items to the diet.

A further round of patience and trickery may then be needed.

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Wishing you and yours the best of good health,
Tom Lonsdale, January 2008
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