



# JONESVILLE ANIMAL HOSPITAL

## **An Active Cat is a Happy Cat**

Keeping our cats active and stimulated is critical to their health and happiness. Boredom and inactivity can lead to stress, often resulting in excessive grooming, inappropriate urination, and aggressive or destructive behaviors. However, we want our cats to live indoors where they are kept safe from fatal infectious diseases, automobile accidents, and wild life predators. So, how do we enrich our cat's lives when they live indoors?

Cats are natural predators. Instinctually, they are driven to hunt, chase, pounce and ultimately catch their prize. With amazing grace and balance, they climb and maneuver to the highest spot that they can find and perch. Enriching your cat's environment involves providing activities that allow them to exercise these natural behaviors.

Offering cats opportunities to hunt for food keeps them active and stimulates their hunting instincts. Placing pieces of food or treats around the house for them to search out can become an engaging game. Putting the treats in elevated areas gives them a reason to climb. Puzzle feeders are great toys that encourage cats to play in order for them to get their food. An example would be a hollow ball in which you place food or treats, and as the cat rolls the ball around, the food falls out of a hole in one end of the ball. The food reward gives them a reason to continue playing and helps to keep them active.

Providing cats with areas to climb, such as climbing trees, is another great way to keep your cat happy and minimize stress. Many cats like to perch in high areas to nap. Additionally, a cat tree can offer a place of refuge and safety for cats living in a multi-cat home. Placing the cat tree in front of a window or using a window perch provides your cat with a place to hang out and watch birds, squirrels and other visually stimulating things. Some cats will appreciate the opportunity to climb on cat walks or shelves installed on a wall, creating a kitty climbing gym. Just be sure that there are always two exit spots so one cat cannot block another cat from getting down.

When you are looking to spend some quality time with your cat, try to get him to chase a feather or a mouse attached to the end of a string. Throw a ping pong ball in the bath tub and watch your cat bat it around. Remember to always keep potentially harmful toys, such as those with string or small chewable parts, out of your cats reach when you are unable to observe your cat. Other fun play items are empty paper bags that crinkle when they play inside and large cardboard boxes in which they can hide.

There are many ways to enrich your cat's environment so that he can remain active, stimulated, relaxed, and healthy. For further consultation, please feel free to call our office to speak with one of our veterinarians. We look forward to helping you keep your cat happy and healthy!