

Cat-Proofing Your Home

- Check all windows and screens to make sure they are very strong. Cats can push weak or torn screens out from the frame or tear them. Cats can escape even from second or third story (or higher!) windows and may injure themselves in the process. It is best to install new steel screens, or place metal grilles such as the ones available for screen doors over windows you wish to keep open. If in doubt, keep the window closed at night and while you are away. If you have a balcony, don't let the cat out there. Cats often try to leap onto railings or after birds and may fall. Balconies are not safe places for cats.
- Remove plants that may be poisonous. Cats love to chew plants, and some cats may use potted plants as a litter box, so try to hang all plants out of reach or move them outside. If you are not sure if your plants are poisonous to cats, ask your vet. Common plants that are poisonous include; philodendrons, ferns, all lillies, and pointsettias. One taste of a lily can kill a cat.
- Lock up all cleaning supplies, drain openers, medications, and other poisonous substances. Place them in a sealable plastic container with a latched lid. Make sure antifreeze is not accessible and do not allow your cat in your garage where leaked fluids can poison her. Animals are attracted to the sweet taste of antifreeze and other toxic substances.
- Check for pest poisons and remove them. Rat poison, ant and roach poison and rodent traps are all dangerous to cats. If you rent your home or recently moved in, do a thorough check for existing poisons, sometimes they are left behind by previous tenants. Check the backs of cupboards, closets, etc. Cats can also become sick or die from eating mice or insects that have ingested the poison.
- Remove dangling cords such as the strings from blinds and phone cords. Cats can't resist playing with these items and can become entangled and hang or choke. Tie up cords from blinds near the top of the window. Some cats (especially kittens) may also chew electrical cords and could be electrocuted, so make sure your cords are tucked away.
- Put away breakable items, especially on bookshelves and countertops where cats may investigate. Make sure shelves and furniture are stable and won't tip over.
- Pick up any small, swallowable items and strings. Rubber bands, paper clips, string, thumb tacks, broken balloons, tree tinsel and other small articles pose a choking hazard. String can cut the intestines if swallowed. If your cat ever swallows string, NEVER pull it out from either end – you can cause internal damage. Call your vet immediately, and if the string is very long, cut the string near the cat to reduce the chance of it catching on something.
- **EXTRA CAUTION WITH KITTENS.** Kittens will get into very small places, always be sure to check on them before starting appliances, moving anything or sitting in a chair. Kittens have been injured or killed in clothes driers, reclining chairs, dresser drawers, and many other places you'd never imagine. So be safe – always know where your kitten is!