



## Excessive Nocturnal Activity in Cats

So, your cat won't let you sleep at night? It attacks your ears, nose, or toes while you sleep, has the "zoomies," walks up and down you, or cries or yowls throughout the night. Any one of which leads you to yell, throw pillows or just get up and feed your cat in hopes that you can get some sleep. Well, at least until the next night.

If this is what is happening to you, you may be a victim of your cats' naturally nocturnal nature or even a medical condition. Don't fret though. There are things you can do to help your own situation once you understand why your cat is acting this way.

*Please have your veterinarian rule out any potential medical conditions prior to self-diagnosing or seeking out advice about your cat's behaviour problems.*

### Why does my cat seem to be most active at night?

There are several reasons your cat may be preventing your restful sleep.

- A cat in heat or seeking a mate may howl because it wants outside.
- A cat lacking social interaction and play during the day and evening may resort to seeking nighttime attention from you.
- Some cats will see their day as beginning when their humans come home from work in the evening and completing when their humans leave the house again in the morning. While this is opposite to what owners would like it to be, nocturnally active cats tend to align their active hours around their humans' presence in the home.
- Some cats will seek food from their owners at night due to
  - A change in diet.
  - A change in feeding times.
  - Being given food at other times to appease the attention-seeking cat.
- Just like us, when cats age their sleep routine may change along with nighttime activity.



- There may be an environmental factor stressing out your cat.
- Various medical conditions may cause your cat to become hyperactive, uncomfortable, or vocal and needy at night. Therefore, it is so important to first seek the advice of your veterinarian.

## How can I keep my cat calm throughout the night?

Many underlying causes for your cat's nighttime activities can be resolved with the following suggestions.

Get your cat spayed or neutered

- Having your cat spayed or neutered can quickly resolve the desire to seek a mate. It can take several weeks for their hormone levels to change but in combination with behavioral modification can significantly reduce the desire to roam.

Create a new routine for your cat.

- Provide your cat with more attention and play when you are home. Especially in the morning, when you get home, and before bedtime. Follow each play session with a snack or small meal. Having a meal following play suggests to cats that it is time to groom and then sleep. High-energy cats will benefit from longer active play sessions (i.e. wand toys) instead of passive toys (mice, balls, etc.).

Keep your cat stimulated throughout the day.

- Leave your cat with interesting self-play activities and toys during the day but remove them when you are home in the evening and overnight. This helps keep your cat interested in them and teaches them playtime is daytime.

Teach your cat to be a daytime foodie.

- Provide your cat with a puzzle feeder and puzzle feeding toys during the day. Foraging and hunting for food appeal to a cat's natural instincts. All you are doing is teaching him to do so during the daytime hours.



If your cat is going through a change in diet, talk to your veterinarian before employing changes to feeding methods.

## Yowling for attention

- Assuming there is not a medical condition for your cat yowling at night, the best advice is to IGNORE IT! Any reaction you have to your cat's nighttime cries only teaches the cat that it gets your attention. That is exactly what it wants. Do not give in to it and eventually it will stop. Implement other tactics to change your cat's activity and don't forget a visit to the veterinarian.
- Sometimes fear or stress-induced nighttime activity. Something within the home or just outside of the home may be causing your cat to get worked up at night. Stress and fear linked to environmental factors often require investigation and a different course of action altogether.

Until you have managed to identify and resolve your cat's nocturnal activities you may benefit from

- Keeping the bedroom door closed at night. Put a towel at the base of the door to stop it from rattling.
- Put your cat in its Safe Room overnight with its water, bed, scratcher, litter box, and a couple of toys. **Do NOT** leave food in the room. You do not want your cat to continue to eat or think this is a good time for eating. Always speak with your veterinarian before drastically altering the diet of any cat with an underlying medical condition.
- Put in earplugs or put on a white noise machine.
- Most of all, be more persistent than your cat.

If you find you are struggling to resolve your cat's nighttime activities, you can always call our behaviour outreach line at 403-723-6019 or book a consultation via our website <https://www.calgaryhumane.ca/what-we-do/animal-training/private-consultations/>