

## Cat Surgery A-Z

### Why Should I Spay My New Kitten?

Dr. Phil Zeltzman is a traveling, board-certified surgeon in Allentown, PA. His website is [www.DrPhilZeltzman.com](http://www.DrPhilZeltzman.com). He is the co-author of "Walk a Hound, Lose a Pound" ([www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)).

Kelly Serfas, a Certified Veterinary Technician in Bethlehem, PA, contributed to this article.

Besides [vaccinations](#) and deworming, spaying a [kitten](#) is a strong recommendation you may hear from your family [veterinarian](#). Your question may then be, why should you spay your kitten?



#### Definition of "spay"

Spaying a kitten means removing the ovaries only (ovariectomy) or removing the ovaries and the uterus (ovario-hysterectomy). Most U.S. veterinarians perform an ovario-hysterectomy. Spaying a kitten, as long as certain precautions are taken under [anesthesia](#), is considered safer than spaying an adult because kittens tend to recover more quickly. Most veterinarians recommend spaying kittens before 6 months of age.

#### Spaying to prevent more kittens

Spaying will prevent your feline from bringing more kittens into the world. Breeding a cat is a big responsibility that should not be taken lightly. Breeders should be knowledgeable about genetics, breed standards and how to handle a [pregnancy](#). Some cats can have a litter of 4, 6 or even more kittens! Are you prepared for that amount of dedication?

Kittens can be a lot of work, and cost a lot of money. Extra veterinary care during pregnancy and for the kittens themselves should be expected. Although rare in cats, there are possible complications that may require a C-section. Although it may seem costly to have your cat spayed, it will actually cost far less than an emergency C-section.

#### Spaying to prevent pyometra

Not spaying a kitten can lead to pyometra later in life, i.e. an infection of the uterus which causes it to fill up with pus. Murphy's Law says that a pyometra is more likely to happen after hours (on an emergency basis) because early signs can be vague until your cat becomes very sick. Once again, it is far less expensive and better for your kitten to spay rather than to take a chance with [emergency surgery](#) for pyometra. In addition, pyometra can cause serious [kidney disease](#) or could even be deadly.

#### Spaying to prevent mammary tumors

Not spaying a kitten before the first heat cycle increases the risk of mammary or breast [tumors](#). The more heat cycles a cat goes through, the higher the risk. Breast tumors are much more aggressive in cats than in dogs (one of the main reasons why it's so critical to spay cats). Close to 99% of mammary tumors are malignant, i.e. [cancerous](#) in cats, while only about 1% are benign. Either way, mammary tumors require surgery which could be costly and is always invasive. Again, preventing the problem is much easier and cheaper than treating it.

#### Spaying to prevent roaming

Intact females may be more likely to wander around, get pregnant by a complete stranger, get hit by a car, end up in other types of trouble (such as a cat fight) or even get lost.

#### Spaying to prevent genetic diseases

Unless your cat is a perfect representative of the breed, there is a possibility of spreading genetic conditions such as kidney, eye or heart diseases.

#### Spaying to prevent heat cycles

Living with a cat in heat is not always the most fun. You need to be prepared for the consequences: urine marking or a very "clingy" [behavior](#).

#### Spaying to prevent false pregnancy

False pregnancy, a.k.a. pseudo-pregnancy, is a strange condition that can occur in unspayed, female cats. They seem to be pregnant, and act like it, but they don't have kittens at all! The reason for this strange and [stressful](#) behavior may be a hormonal imbalance; therefore, the definitive treatment is to spay the cat, i.e. remove the source of hormones: the ovaries.

For your kitten's safety and health, please spay her, and be sure to do it before the first heat cycle. Think of it as a small investment that will pay dividends for the

## Cat Surgery A-Z

rest of her life.

### Questions to ask your veterinarian

- When is the best time to spay my kitten?
- What precautions are taken during anesthesia?
- What is the post-op care at home?

*If you have any questions or concerns, you should always visit or call your veterinarian -- they are your best resource to ensure the health and well-being of your pets.*