

PRACTICAL ADVICE

# Keep fit with kitty



Could you and your cat enjoy a workout together? Most people see dogs as the most suitable fitness friends, but you and your cat can help each other to keep fit and lose weight too. Dr Nicola Davies reveals all.

Cats need exercise, and they love being active with their favourite people. However, not every cat (or person) has the same fitness levels or exercise interests. So what are the best activities for different cats and different types of people?

Before we investigate all of the fitness facts, we have to ask ourselves if our fur babies are getting a bit (or a lot) too comfortable around the waist. In fact, some people admit to preferring the look of overweight cats to those of a healthy weight, feeling that fat cats are cuddlier and more amusing to watch. Some research has even linked our love of cute cats with their similarity to human babies — and who doesn't

adore a chubby baby face? However, letting your cat become overweight or obese is no laughing matter and poses a health risk that could drastically shorten his life-expectancy.

In 2014, PDSA, the UK's largest veterinary charity, reported that one in four cats is overweight or obese\*, in what it terms a "pet obesity epidemic". Sarah Carr, veterinary campaigns advisor for PDSA, explains: "Pet obesity continues to be a major concern for veterinary professionals, with 80 per cent of vets seeing an increase in levels of pet obesity over the last two years. Many cat owners seemingly still rely on 'common sense' or past experience when deciding how much to feed their



cat, but people often over-estimate how much food their cat actually needs, which contributes to the pet obesity crisis. Findings from our most recent PDSA Animal Wellbeing (PAW) Report also show that over 5.5 million pets get treats as part of their daily diet

including crisps, cake, leftovers of human food and even takeaways!"

Worryingly, PDSA also expects to see the number of overweight felines increasing. To address this, the charity offers an annual Pet Fit Club, which provides a six-month programme for overweight

\* All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1,069 pet owners and 572 veterinary professionals. Fieldwork was undertaken between 18 September – 10 October 2014. The survey was carried out online and weighted to be representative of the cat, dog and rabbit owners in the UK.