

# Can Indoor Cats Get Fleas?

 [www.cat-world.com.au/can-indoor-cats-get-fleas.html](http://www.cat-world.com.au/can-indoor-cats-get-fleas.html)

[Can indoor cats get fleas?](#) [How does it happen?](#) [How do I know if my cat has fleas?](#) [Treating cat fleas](#)  
[Treating the home](#) [Diseases transmitted by fleas](#)

## Can indoor cats get fleas?

Yes, it is possible for indoor cats to get fleas. Unfortunately, fleas are highly adept at finding new animals to infest and that includes cats who are kept indoors.

Fleas are everywhere, not just on the outdoor tom who roams the neighbourhood. They are determined to find a new host to infest. Only 5% of fleas are adults, living on their host, eggs, pupae and larvae make up the remaining 95% and live in the environment. The lifecycle of the flea is as follows:



**Egg** – The female flea lays around 40-50 eggs per day which drop off the cat and into the environment. Flea eggs are a white/cream colour and approximately .5mm long.

**Larvae** – Eggs hatch into maggot-like larvae after a week. Larvae live in nooks and crannies, under furniture, in carpets and rugs, they feed on organic debris such as adult flea feces.

**Pupae** – After two weeks, larvae cocoon themselves into pupae.

**Adult flea emerges** – Fleas can remain as adults ready to emerge from their protective pupae in as little as two weeks. However, they need a stimulus to emerge. Heat, carbon dioxide and vibrations stimulate the adult flea to emerge from its cocoon. In the absence of these stimulants, the flea can remain in its cocoon for up to 5-6 months. The adult flea starts to lay her eggs within 24 hours of her first blood meal.

Fleas thrive in dark, warm and humid conditions.

## Flea transmission:

Firstly a couple of flea statistics. An adult flea can live for 1-2 weeks without a blood meal. An adult flea is also capable of jumping 8 inches vertically and 13 inches horizontally.

### ***From you or other visitors:***

Yes, that's right. You and other people visiting your home could be inadvertently infecting your cat with fleas when they hitchhike a ride in on your clothing or shoes. This could be from the pet of a friend you have visited or one who hopped onto you from the environment.

Wild animals such as rats or possums can introduce fleas to your home via crawlspaces, windows or attics.

### ***From the garden***

Fleas can live both inside and outside the home. Fleas can easily be introduced to your garden via neighborhood, stray or feral cats, dogs and wild animals. Even if your cat never goes outside, it is still possible for a flea to enter the house through a window or hitchhike a ride in on a person.

## ***From the home***

It is also possible for cats to acquire a flea infestation from the home itself. This may be the case if you have moved into a new home which may have flea pupae in their dormant state. This happened to our cats when we moved into a rental and within a short period of time, our cats had a heavy infestation of fleas, which not only liked the cats but took the occasional bite from us, human occupants, also.

## ***From outside the home***

Cats can be exposed to fleas any time they leave the home to visit the veterinarian, boarding cattery or pet groomer. This may be from dormant pupae or a flea hopping from one animal to another.

## **How do I know if my cat has fleas?**



The most common sign your cat has fleas is scratching. Some cats will be particularly sensitive to the saliva from a flea bite and develop dermatitis, with crusting on the skin, especially near the base of the tail and around the neck. Cats (and especially kittens) with a heavy infestation can become anemic due to blood loss. Pale gums are a sign of anemia in cats.

- Check your cat carefully for the presence of adult fleas in the coat. Fleas are dark brown in colour and 1-2mm in length. It is easier to see fleas in cats with light coloured coats.
- Get a fine-toothed flea comb and carefully comb through your cat's fur to look for fleas or their feces.
- If you can't see any fleas but still suspect your cat is infested, grab one or two pieces of white A4 paper and lightly spray them with water. Stand your cat on the paper (this may take two people) and rough up his coat. Feces should fall off your cat and onto the paper. This has the appearance of pepper and once it hits the damp paper a red circle will appear (which is the digested blood from your cat).
- Check areas your cat sleeps for salt and pepper like particles, which are eggs (white) and feces (brown).

## **Treatment:**

This is a two-pronged approach. Treat your cat and the environment.

The best flea products are available from your veterinarian. There are a number of different types on the market, below is a list of some effective flea products, but these may vary from country to country.

## **Tablets**

- Comfortis
- Sentinel
- Capstar

## **Topical solutions**

- Revolution
- Advantage
- Program
- Frontline
- Activyl
- Advocate

## **Sprays**

- Frontline
- Advantage

## **Treat the environment:**

It is important to treat the environment as well. Vacuum your home including under furniture, along skirting boards and in nooks and crannies.

Wash all pet bedding in hot water. Either tumble dry or hang out to dry in the sun.

The house will need to be sprayed. You can either buy a 'flea bomb' from your local supermarket or hire a pest controller. I always recommend the second. If you bring somebody in to spray for fleas, tell him you have cats beforehand as some insect sprays are toxic to cats.

Fleas are a massive nuisance to both your cat and the homeowner. Once you have treated your cat (and home) for fleas, use a regular flea preventative.

## **Diseases transmitted by fleas:**

Fleas are more than a pest to your cat, they are also capable of transmitting several diseases including:

- Tapeworm
- Plague
- Tularemia
- Feline infectious anemia
- Bartonella henselae
- Rickettsia

## **Other causes of itching in cats:**

There are a number of other possible causes of itchiness such as:

- Mites
- Allergies
- Ringworm
- Miliary dermatitis
- Cheyletiellosis
- Chiggers
- Pemphigus