

## So You Found a Litter of Kittens. What's Next?

If the kittens are in a safe spot, leave them- if the mother is alive and hunting the mother will come back for them. If you are unsure if the mother cat is around place a ring of flour around the kittens and wait 4 hours. Do not constantly check on the kittens. Shy Mother Cats will observe from a distance and not approach if you are hovering over the kittens. After waiting 4 hours and no sign of Mom wait another 4 hours. If you know the mother is not coming back, and you decide to intervene – realize you are taking on a huge responsibility. Be prepared for sleepless nights, some frustrations, and of course, some happy and grateful kittens.

Always take the kittens to a vet, to make sure they are healthy. The vet can assess the kittens and treat them for illnesses. Pawmetto Lifeline offers a Wellness Clinic that can evaluate and provide basic care for the kittens. The Wellness Clinic is NOT an emergency clinic. To make an appointment with the Wellness Clinic call 803-465-9196 or email [wellness@pawmettolifeline.org](mailto:wellness@pawmettolifeline.org)

### Newborn kitten Supplies:

- Cat carrier
- Heating pad
- Fleece blankets- Do NOT use towels.
- Bottles and nipples or 3ml syringes
- Kitten Milk Replacer (KMR) → Do NOT give cows milk or baby formula
- Baby wipes or soft cloth

### Newborn kitten tips:

1. Kittens CANNOT regulate their own body temperature for their first four weeks of life. Make sure to keep the kittens warm with a heating pad and fleece blankets. Bath towels do not hold warmth.
2. Do NOT bottle/syringe feed kittens on their back or while cold. Place kittens on their tummy with his/her head tilted slightly up for feedings. The kitten may struggle with the first few feedings but stick with it. It takes time for the kittens to get used to your smell and the bottle. After feeding wipe kittens chin and face with damp warm cloth.

3. Before and after feedings the kittens will need to be stimulated to go to the bathroom. Gently rub the genital area in a circular motion with a soft cloth or cotton balls until the kitten has urinated and/or defecated. Kittens are not fond of the process and will scream and fight but it must be done. They will relax once they go to the bathroom.
4. Flea treatment cannot be applied to kittens before 6 weeks of age. Before 6 weeks you can kill fleas by giving the kittens a bath in warm water with blue dawn dish detergent. Make sure to dry the kitten thoroughly.

#### Kitten feeding schedule:

Caring for kittens is a very difficult job. Setting alerts is very helpful to remind the caretaker when to feed and to check the kittens are warm. Below is a general guideline for feeding but don't be surprised if your kittens require more frequent feedings.

\*Birth to three weeks of age: every two hours

\*Three weeks: every three hours

\*Four weeks to six weeks: every four hours

Additional resources:

<http://www.kittenlady.org/>

<https://www.alleycat.org/resources/how-old-is-that-kitten-guide/>

<https://bestfriends.org/resources/bottle-feeding-kittens>