

Your Abyssinian

Caring for Your Faithful Companion



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Your Abyssinian

Abyssinians:

What a Unique Breed!

Your cat is special! She senses your moods, is curious about your day, and has purred her way into your heart. Chances are that you chose her because you like Abyssinians (sometimes called "Abys") and you expected her to have certain traits that would fit your lifestyle, like:

- Alert, curious, and busy
- Has a quiet or soft voice
- Loves jumping and being in high places
- Entertaining - likes to "perform" for her owners
- Graceful, quick, and agile
- Highly interactive and playful with owners

However, no cat is perfect! You may have also noticed these characteristics:

- May want to constantly be involved in your activities
- People-oriented and should not be left alone for long periods of time
- Fearless and can get into trouble if not properly supervised
- Has a tendency to escape, wander, and roam
- May not do well in small confined spaces like apartments; lots of room to roam is ideal
- Can have an unstable temperament if not bred properly, including nervousness, shyness, or fearfulness

Is it all worth it? Of course! She's full of personality, and you love her for it! She is an inquisitive and outgoing little busybody. Include her in your daily activities and she will be a playful and affectionate companion.

The Abyssinian is thought to have originated in Southeast Asia and the Indian Coast. They are said to be one of the oldest cat breeds, resembling cats depicted in Egyptian tombs. Abys have a distinctive wildcat look with their ticked



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coat and large erect ears. They are a highly social breed and can be demanding of attention. They do well in multi-cat households due to their social nature. Not a snuggly lap cat, Abyssinians are in constant motion, either exploring or playing. They are fond of water and are even known to play fetch. The Abyssinian is people-oriented and can be demanding of your attention.

Your Abyssinian's Health

We know that because you care so much about your cat, you want to take great care of her. That is why we have summarized the health concerns we will be discussing with you over the life of your Aby. By knowing about the health concerns common among Abyssinians, we can help you tailor an individual preventive health plan and hopefully prevent some predictable risks in your pet.

Many diseases and health conditions are genetic, meaning they are related to your pet's breed. The conditions we will describe here have a significant rate of incidence or a strong impact upon this breed particularly, according to a general consensus among feline genetic researchers and veterinary practitioners. This does not mean your cat will have these problems, only that she may be more at risk than other cats. We will describe the most common issues seen in Abyssinians to give you an idea of what may come up in her future. Of course, we can't cover every possibility here, so always check with us if you notice any unusual signs or symptoms.

This guide contains general health information important to all felines as well as information on genetic predispositions for Abyssinians. The information here can help you and your pet's healthcare team plan for your pet's unique medical needs together. At the end of the booklet, we have also included a description of what you can do at home to keep your Aby looking and feeling her best. We hope this information will help you know what to watch for, and we will all feel better knowing that we're taking the best possible care of your friend.

General Health Information for your Abyssinian

Weight Management

Obesity is a major disease that contributes to a surprisingly large number of illnesses and deaths in cats.

This revelation is more well-known and well-understood today than in the last few decades, but too many owners are still ignoring the dangers of extra weight on their pets. Excess weight is one of the most influential factors in the development of arthritis, diabetes, and other life-threatening diseases. Everyone knows—many firsthand from personal experience—how even shedding just a few pounds can result in improved mobility and increased overall motivation to be active. And the same is true for your pet.

Research suggests that carrying excess weight may shorten a pet's life by as much as two years, and can cause the onset of arthritis two years sooner. Diabetes, an inherited disease, has a

much higher chance of developing in overweight pets, and may never become a problem for a healthy-weight cat. The more obese a cat becomes, the more likely it will become diabetic. **Hepatic lipidosis**, or fatty liver, is another potentially fatal disease in overweight pets; hepatic lipidosis can develop in as few as 48 hours when an overweight cat stops eating for any reason.

So how can we help our pets stay trim? Understanding your cat's dietary habits is key. The average cat prefers to eat about 10-15 times a day, just a few nibbles at a time. This method, free-feeding, works well for most cats, but boredom may increase the number of trips your cat makes to the food bowl. By keeping your cat playfully active and engaged, you'll help your pet stay healthy and have some fun at the same time! A string tied to a stick with something crinkly or fuzzy on the other end of the string, and a little imagination—you and your cat will both be entertained. Food puzzles, like kibbles put in a paper bag or under an overturned basket or box, may help to motivate cats with more food-based interests to romp and tumble.

For really tough cases of overeating, you will have to take a firm stance, and regulate your cat's food intake. Instead of filling your cat's bowl to the top, follow the feeding guide on the food package and be sure to feed a high-quality adult cat diet as recommended by your vet. Replace your cat's habits of eating when bored with extra playtime and affection. Cats typically adjust their desires for personal interaction by the amount of affection offered to them, so in other words, ignoring your cat means your cat will ignore you. By the same token, loving on and playing with your cat a lot will cause your cat to desire that time with you. A more active cat means a healthier, happier pet—and owner!

Dental Disease

Dental disease is one of the most common chronic problems in pets who don't have their teeth brushed regularly. Unfortunately, most cats don't take very good care of their own teeth, and this probably includes your Aby. Without extra help and care from you, your cat is likely to develop potentially serious dental problems. Dental disease starts with food residue, which hardens into tartar that builds up on the visible parts of the teeth, and eventually leads to infection of the gums and tooth roots. Protecting your cat against dental disease from the start by removing food residue regularly may help prevent or delay the need for advanced treatment of dental disease. This treatment can be stressful for your cat and expensive for you, so preventive care is beneficial all around. In severe cases of chronic dental infection, your pet may even lose teeth or sustain damage to internal organs. And, if nothing else, your cat will be a more pleasant companion not knocking everyone over with stinky cat breath! We'll show you how to keep your cat's pearly whites clean at home, and help you schedule regular routine dental exams.

Vaccine-Preventable Infections

Like all cats, Abyssinians are susceptible to bacterial and viral infections such as **panleukopenia**, **calicivirus**, **rhinotracheitis**, and **rabies**, which are preventable through vaccination. The risk of your cat contracting these diseases is high, so the

corresponding vaccines are called “core” vaccines, which are highly recommended for all cats. In addition, vaccines are available to offer protection from other dangerous diseases like [feline leukemia virus \(FeLV\)](#). In making vaccination recommendations for your cat, we will consider the prevalence of these diseases in our area, your cat’s age, and any other risk factors specific to her lifestyle.

Parasites

All kinds of worms and bugs can invade your Aby's body, inside and out. Everything from fleas and ticks to ear mites can infest her skin and ears. Hookworms, roundworms, heartworms, and whipworms can get into her system in a number of ways: drinking unclean water, walking on contaminated soil, or being bitten by an infected mosquito. Some of these parasites can be transmitted to you or a family member and are a serious concern for everyone. For your feline friend, these parasites can cause pain, discomfort, and even death, so it’s important that we test for them on a regular basis. Many types of parasites can be detected with a fecal exam, so it’s a good idea to bring a fresh stool sample (in a stink-proof container, please) with your pet for her twice-a-year wellness exams. We’ll also recommend preventive medication as necessary to keep her healthy.

Spay or Neuter

One of the best things you can do for your Aby is to have her spayed (neutered for males). In females, this procedure includes surgically removing the ovaries and usually the uterus; in males, the testicles are surgically removed. Spaying or neutering your pet decreases the likelihood of certain types of cancers and eliminates the possibility of your pet becoming pregnant or fathering unwanted litters. Both sexes usually become less territorial and less likely to roam, and neutering particularly decreases the occurrence of urine spraying and marking behaviors in males. Performing this surgery also gives us a chance, while your pet is under anesthesia, to identify and address some of the diseases your cat is likely to develop. For example, if your pet needs hip X-rays to check for [dysplasia](#) or a thorough dental exam to look for [stomatitis](#), these procedures can be conveniently performed at the same time as the spay or neuter to minimize the stress on your cat. Routine blood testing prior to surgery also helps us to identify and take precautions against common problems that increase anesthetic or surgical risk. It sounds like a lot to keep in mind, but don’t worry - we’ll discuss all the specific problems we will look for with you when the time arrives.

Genetic Predispositions for Abyssinians

Heart Disease

[Cardiomyopathy](#) is the medical term for heart muscle disease, either a primary inherited condition or secondary to other diseases that damage the heart. The most common form, called hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, or HCM, is a thickening of the heart muscle often caused by an overactive thyroid gland. Another example is dilated cardiomyopathy, or DCM, which

can be caused by a dietary deficiency of the amino acid taurine. While DCM was a big problem in the past, all major cat food producers now add taurine to cat food, so DCM is rarely seen in cats with high-quality diets today.

Catching signs of cardiomyopathy early is important, but a cat's normal tendency to hide illness can make symptoms difficult to spot. The first thing a pet parent usually notices is rapid breathing, lethargy, and a poor appetite. These symptoms may appear to come on suddenly, often between a few hours to a few days, but in most cases, the cat has actually been suffering quietly for weeks to months and is now in serious trouble. In addition, HCM can cause blood clots to form inside the heart. These clots can then leave the heart and become lodged in the major arteries that transport blood to the rear legs. If this happens, the cat will suddenly lose the use of both rear legs and the tail—the legs will become cold to the touch and will seem extremely painful. In either case, whether rapid breathing or painful paralysis, the cat is experiencing a medical emergency, and needs immediate veterinary care.

For a few breeds of cats, genetic testing is available for a specific gene abnormality that causes HCM. Most cats with cardiomyopathy have a heart murmur that can be detected during a wellness physical exam, but a specific diagnosis requires more advanced medical imaging. Finding this problem early, when treatment is most effective, is another important reason to have your pet evaluated twice a year for life.

Arterial Thromboembolism

Cats with heart disease may develop blood clots in their arteries known as [FATE \(feline aortic thromboembolisms\)](#). Blood clots most commonly become lodged just past the aorta, the large blood vessel that supplies blood from the heart to the body, blocking normal blood flow to the hind legs. When this happens, one or both hind legs may become paralyzed, cold, or painful. FATE is a life-threatening disease, and requires quick action and prolonged medical care. Cats who survive thromboembolisms, however, usually regain full function of their limbs. If your cat is diagnosed with heart disease, we may prescribe medications to help lower the risk of blood clots. If your cat suddenly can’t walk or is dragging one or both back legs and crying, don’t wait! Your pet needs immediate emergency care.

FIP Susceptibility

[Feline Infectious Peritonitis, or FIP](#), is a fatal disease caused by a type of coronavirus. All cats may carry this virus in a dormant state, but if the virus undergoes a combination of specific mutations, it can act on a susceptible cat’s immune system, causing the cat to develop FIP. Abyssinians seem to be more at risk for developing FIP than other breeds. FIP causes damage to the blood vessels (vasculitis) and fluid build-up inside the abdomen or chest. Blood testing is available for detecting coronaviruses in cats, but these tests don’t differentiate well between non-harmful coronaviruses and the actual FIP disease. Screening cats for this disease before breeding or selling them is therefore difficult and unreliable. FIP is always a risk for any kitten, but more so when purchasing a purebred cat from a breeder; once FIP has developed in a cattery population, it is tough to get rid of it. Be



very careful to ask about any history of FIP infection in a kitten or cat's family or cattery history before purchasing your pet. Unfortunately, there is currently no effective treatment for FIP, and it is a fatal disease.

Cryptococcosis

[Cryptococcosis](#) is an infection caused by the yeast-like fungus *Cryptococcus neoformans*. Siamese, Abyssinians, and cats with compromised immune systems, such as from FeLV or FIV, are more susceptible to these infections. The fungus is contracted through the nasal passages and can spread to other organs such as the brain, eyes, and lungs where it grows and thrives, making the cat ill. Initial symptoms include lethargy, weight loss, and sneezing with nasal discharge, while more severe symptoms can present as fever, difficulty breathing, eye disease, a swollen or ulcerated nose, superficial skin nodules, or draining tracts, as well as seizures and disorientation if the nervous system is affected. Most cats affected by the fungus can be successfully treated with oral antifungal medications.

Blood Type

Although we hate to think of the worst happening to our pets, when disaster strikes, it's best to be prepared. One of the most effective life-saving treatments available in emergency medicine today is the use of blood transfusions. If your cat is ever critically ill or injured and in need of a blood transfusion, the quicker the procedure is started, the better the pet's chance of survival.

Just like people, individual cats have different blood types. Most domestic cats have type A blood, but purebred cats, like your Abyssinian often have a different blood type, usually type B or very rarely, type AB. Determining your cat's blood type is essential before starting a transfusion, so knowing your cat's type ahead of time can save crucial minutes. Blood typing is recommended for all cats, but is especially important for purebreds. This test can be done as part of a routine wellness blood testing, and the results can be added to your pet's microchip record as well for fast action even if you aren't there.

Neonatal Isoerythrolysis (NI)/Hemolytic Icterus

[Neonatal isoerythrolysis, or NI](#), is a rare immune-mediated disease that is caused when a newborn kitten with type A blood

suckles colostrum (first milk) from a mother with type B blood or vice-versa. The mother's immunity against type A blood is contained in her colostrum, so when the kitten nurses, the antigen is absorbed into the kitten's bloodstream through ingestion. The resulting immune reaction develops antibodies that attack and destroy the kitten's own red blood cells. Consequently, affected kittens usually die within a few days of birth. NI can occur in many cat breeds, but is more often seen in breeds with a higher likelihood of having type B blood like your Abyssinian. If you plan to breed your cat, you will need to learn more about this problem beforehand from your veterinarian.

Increased Osmotic Fragility of Erythrocytes

Red blood cells (also called erythrocytes or RBCs) are needed to carry oxygen from the lungs to the rest of the body. Anemia occurs when there are too few erythrocytes in the blood to carry oxygen to the body. A cat with anemia will tire easily and may have pale or bluish-tinged gums. A specific type of anemia, increased osmotic fragility of erythrocytes, is caused by the production of abnormally fragile RBCs that have a shorter lifespan than normal blood cells, which leads to a shortage of RBCs in the bloodstream. This condition has been documented in a small number of young Abyssinians, ranging from six months to five years of age, and is likely to be a hereditary disease. The disorder results in mild to severe intermittent hemolytic anemia: "hemolytic" means that the fragile red blood cells are abnormally damaged and destroyed by the normal jostling activity that cells experience while traveling through the circulatory system. The dead cells are then removed by the spleen, and the unusually high number of damaged erythrocytes causes the organ to become enlarged. Diagnosis of the disorder requires special testing to rule out other causes of hemolytic anemia. Unfortunately, increased osmotic fragility of erythrocytes is a relatively recent discovery, and research has not yet provided a cure for the disorder, but blood transfusions can relieve severe symptoms of anemia.

Pyruvate Kinase Deficiency

[Pyruvate kinase deficiency \(PKD\)](#) is an inherited disease caused by a deficiency in the enzyme pyruvate kinase, which is found in red blood cells. Pyruvate kinase enables cells to produce the energy necessary for their own survival; when pyruvate kinase is lacking, the lifespan of red blood cells is significantly reduced, resulting in anemia in the pet. Luckily, this type of anemia is usually mild or occurs gradually, enabling the cat's body to adapt to the change without any apparent symptoms. More rarely, however, PKD can cause a rapidly developing, severe, and life-threatening form of anemia. PKD is inherited as an autosomal recessive trait, and a reliable genetic test is available that can distinguish among affected, carrier, and non-carrier cats. Because symptoms are not always apparent, this test should be performed for both parents before breeding susceptible breeds like Abyssinians.

FLUTD

When your cat urinates outside the litter box, you may be annoyed or furious, especially if your best pair of shoes was the location chosen for the act. But don't get mad too quickly—in the majority of cases, cats who urinate around the house are sending signals for help. Although true urinary incontinence,

the inability to control the bladder muscles, is rare in cats and is usually due to improper nerve function from a spinal defect, most of the time, a cat that is urinating in “naughty” locations is having a problem and is trying to get you to notice. What was once considered to be one urinary syndrome has turned out to be several over years of research, but current terminology gathers these different diseases together under the label of [Feline Lower Urinary Tract Diseases, or FLUTD](#). Many of these diseases cause similar symptoms, for example, a cat with urolithiasis, or bladder stones, shows many of the same symptoms as a cat with a urinary tract infection, which may also present like the symptoms of a blocked tomcat. Watching for any signs of abnormal urination, like urinating on cool surfaces (a tile floor or bathtub, for example), blood in the urine, straining to urinate with little or no urine production, or crying in the litterbox can help you identify the first signs of a FLUTD. If your cat demonstrates any of these symptoms, call us right away for an urgent appointment. Particularly for male cats, if the urethra is blocked with stones or crystals, the cat is not able to expel any urine, which can become an emergency within only a few hours. The inability to urinate is painful and quickly fatal, so if your cat may be blocked, seek emergency care immediately.

Cats are very good at hiding how sick they are, so the early signs of FLUTD are easy to miss. Bringing your cat in for regular urinalysis testing allows us to check for signs of infection, kidney disease, crystals in the urine, and even diabetes. X-rays and ultrasounds can also help detect the presence of stones in the bladder or kidneys. Lower urinary tract disease can be controlled with medications and special diets, though severe cases of FLUTD may also require surgery.

Amyloidosis

An amyloid is a type of protein compound that can cause disease by abnormally collecting inside of tissues and organs. It is the same protein that builds up in the brains of human Alzheimer’s patients. In cats, amyloids are more likely to accumulate in the abdominal organs, especially the kidneys, liver, and pancreas. This buildup of protein clogs the organ and causes organ failure. Signs of organ failure may appear on blood or urine tests, but a tissue biopsy is the only way to specifically diagnose [amyloidosis](#) as the cause of the failure. There is no effective treatment for amyloidosis as a disease, but we can use diet and medication to support the function of affected organs.

Renal Failure

[Renal failure](#) refers to the inability of the kidneys to properly perform their functions of cleansing waste from the blood and regulating hydration. Kidney disease is extremely common in older cats, but is usually due to exposure to toxins or genetic causes in young cats. Even very young kittens can have renal failure if they have inherited kidney defects, so we recommend screening for kidney problems early, before any anesthesia or surgery, and then regularly throughout life. Severe renal failure is a progressive, fatal disease, but special diets and medications can help cats with kidney disease live longer, fuller lives.

Patellar Luxation

The stifle, or knee joint, is a remarkable structure that allows a

cat to perform amazing feats of agility like crouching, jumping, and pouncing. One of the main components of the stifle is the patella, or kneecap, and the medical term luxation means “being out of place”. Thus, a luxating patella is a kneecap that slips off to the side of the leg because of an improperly developed stifle. A cat with a luxating patella may not show signs of pain or abnormality until the condition is well advanced; signs of this condition appear gradually and can progress to lameness as the cat grows older. Early detection of a luxating patella is key to effective therapy, so getting your cat an x-ray at the time of her spay or his neuter, around three to six months of age, is a good way to check. If the problem is mild and involves only one leg, your pet may not require much treatment beyond typical arthritis medication. When symptoms are more severe, surgery may be needed to realign the kneecap and prevent it from popping out of place. Although the tendency for patellar luxation seems to be inherited, developmental problems in joints have complex inheritance patterns, and genetic tests have not yet been developed for this condition. Patellar luxation occurs in many breeds, but Abyss are at higher risk for the condition.

Hip Dysplasia

Most commonly seen in dogs, hip dysplasia may also occur in cats, especially in Abyssinians. Dysplasia is an inheritable condition that causes malformation of the hip joints and subsequent arthritis. Usually a cat shows very few clinical symptoms as an adolescent, but begins slowing down and acting like an older cat prematurely within the first few years. Severely affected cats, however, may show lameness by six months of age. Pelvic X-rays are needed to detect early hip dysplasia; cats should be anesthetized or sedated for this procedure, in part because the radiograph machine is a frightful and stressing situation for cats, but also because X-rays of the pelvis should be taken while the cat is perfectly still.



Anesthesia allows for proper positioning of the cat to produce a clear, diagnostic radiograph, without the pain and fear most cats experience with X-rays, especially if they already have sore hips. Hip dysplasia is best treated when detected early, so initial X-rays of the hips are recommended at the time of your kitten's spay or neuter, usually around three to six months of age. X-rays can also be conveniently scheduled at the time of your cat's annual dental cleaning in order to minimize the number of anesthetic events your cat undergoes. If necessary, hip dysplasia can be alleviated by surgical restructuring of the pelvis to help relieve pain and allow greater mobility for your affected cat. Because the disease is genetic, if you are purchasing a purebred kitten, be sure to ask your breeder whether the parents' hips have been X-rayed.

Gingivitis

Gingivitis is inflammation of the gingiva, or gums. Just like in people, it causes redness and pain in the gums and is often linked to other diseases. In mild cases, gingivitis can be treated with a mouth rinse and represents only a minor problem, but without treatment it can progress to more severe afflictions such as periodontal disease or stomatitis. Gingivitis has also been associated with resorptive lesions and retrovirus infections such as the [feline leukemia virus \(FeLV\)](#) and the [feline immunodeficiency virus \(FIV\)](#). One of the best things you can do for your friend is to have his mouth evaluated by us often. Remember, cats are superstar actors and are great at masking illnesses, so you may not realize he is having any oral problems at all without an examination. With our trained healthcare team, we can safely look in his mouth to see if he is experiencing any pain or tooth trouble. Even though your cat may look great and act normally, he may be hiding a real problem in the back of his mouth!

- *Resorptive oral lesions:* [Resorptive oral Lesions, or RLs](#), are erosions of the enamel on the surface of teeth, at or below the gum line. About 70% of purebred cats and 40% of mixed breed cats get them, and if a cat has one RL there is a 72% chance the cat has or will develop additional ones. Tooth resorption begins as a small erosion in the enamel and over a short period of time, the lesions progress, growing larger and deeper, eroding more and more of the tooth. Once the enamel is eroded enough to expose the dentin layer underneath, they become painful. In fact, they become so painful, cats will often 'chatter' their lower jaw when their teeth are exposed to anything cold – food or air. The affected tooth may fracture, or the gums may grow up onto the side of the tooth, and eventually the tooth will be lost. These lesions are very painful to your cat and should be treated promptly when found. That's why we recommend twice yearly visits to evaluate your pet. No one likes excruciating tooth pain!

Psychogenic Alopecia

[Psychogenic alopecia](#) is an anxiety-related behavior. Affected cats will groom themselves so aggressively that they become bald in some areas. It's a nervous habit, like people chewing their fingernails. Often cats only do this when they are bored and alone, so pet owners don't always see the excessive

licking, just the resultant hair loss. Allergies and parasites are much more common causes of hair loss and can cause similar behaviors as alopecia, so these should be ruled out first before assuming that a cat with hair loss suffers from excessive anxiety. Psychogenic alopecia has been reported more often in Abyssinians than in other breeds, so be sure to watch for aggressive grooming at home. If you do notice excessive licking or patchy hair loss, we will first rule out other causes, such as mites and allergies, then recommend treatment to help curb the behavior.

Shaft Disorder of Abyssinian Cats

Shaft disorder is a rare genetic trait that causes a dull hair coat and brittleness in the whiskers and primary fur of Abyssinian cats. If your pet is at risk, monitoring your cat's coat condition is important. Other skin conditions can also cause similar hair loss and dullness; if you notice any bald spots or broken whiskers on your pet, we'll want to make sure that mites or other skin problems aren't to blame first. The development of shaft disorder is not well understood, but the condition is not fatal and skin conditioning treatments are available.

Feline Hyperesthesia Syndrome

While anesthesia means a lack of sensation or feeling, hyperesthesia means feeling too much. Cats with [hyperesthesia](#) have increased sensitivity to touch and other stimulation of the skin and nerves. You may notice your cat's skin rippling along the back when it experiences even light touches or other triggers to the condition. Affected cats appear to be uncomfortable with the sensation and may cry, try to run away, or self-mutilate trying to lick or chew the sensation away. Other diseases of the skin or nervous system may cause similar signs, so we'll run tests to determine the specific problem. If chewing is the only symptom you are noticing, treatment may be as simple as monthly flea prevention! For cats with hyperesthesia, medications can sometimes help alleviate the negative sensations, but close monitoring is constantly required to prevent the cat from self-endangerment.

Nasopharyngeal Polyps

The term "naso" refers to the nose and sinus cavities and "pharyngeal" to the pharynx at the back of the mouth. A [nasopharyngeal polyp](#) is an abnormal growth that may develop in these areas as the result of chronic inflammation, such as an ear or sinus infection. Once present, the polyp itself can cause further problems by obstructing the sinuses or the ear canal, sometimes leading to secondary infections, balance problems, or just constant annoyance for the cat, who may feel like there's something stuck in an unscratchable place. Some cat breeds, like your Abyssinian, tend to form these polyps more than other breeds. Surgery to remove polyps is generally recommended.

Progressive Retinal Atrophy

[Progressive retinal atrophy \(PRA\)](#) is an inherited disease in some Abyssinian bloodlines in which the eyes are genetically programmed to go blind over time. PRA may cause varying degrees of vision loss, but in most cases results in total blindness with no effective treatment or cure. Because this disease is caused by a recessive gene, normal cats can be



carriers, and a kitten with normal parents may still develop PRA. Most affected cats begin to show signs of the disease at around one-and-a-half to two years of age. Night blindness comes first, progressing to total blindness over a period of about two to four years. In some breeds, the disease starts even earlier at about two to three weeks of age, resulting in full blindness by about 16 weeks. A genetic test is available to test parents as carriers before breeding; responsible breeders recommend that affected cats and their close relatives should not be used for breeding.

Taking Care of Your Abyssinian at Home

Much of what you can do at home to keep your cat happy and healthy is common sense, just like it is for people. Watch her diet, make sure she gets plenty of exercise, regularly brush her teeth and coat, and call us or a pet emergency hospital when something seems unusual (see “What to Watch For” below). Be sure to adhere to the schedule of examinations and vaccinations that we recommend for your pet. During your cat's exams, we'll perform her necessary “check-ups” and test for diseases and conditions that are common in Abys. Another very important step in caring for your pet is signing her up for pet health insurance. There will certainly be medical tests and procedures she will need throughout her life and pet health insurance will help you cover those costs.

Routine Care, Diet, and Exercise

Build your pet's routine care into your schedule to help your Aby live longer, stay healthier, and be happier during her lifetime. We cannot overemphasize the importance of a proper diet and exercise routine for your pet.

- ✓ Supervise your pet as you would a young child. Keep doors closed, pick up after yourself, and block off rooms as necessary. This will help keep her out of trouble, off of inappropriate surfaces for jumping, and away from objects

- she shouldn't put in her mouth.
- ✓ She has a low maintenance short coat. Brush as needed, at least weekly for a healthy shine.
- ✓ Abyssinians often have serious problems with their teeth, so you'll need to brush them at least three times a week!
- ✓ Check her ears weekly for wax, debris, or signs of infection and clean when necessary. Don't worry—we'll show you how!
- ✓ She needs daily play sessions that stimulate her natural desire to hunt and explore. Keep her mind and body active or she may develop behavior issues.
- ✓ Cats are meticulously clean and demand a clean litter box. Be sure to provide at least one box for each cat and scoop waste daily.
- ✓ It is important that your cat drinks adequate amounts of water. If she won't drink water from her bowl try adding ice cubes or a flowing fountain.
- ✓ Feed a high-quality feline diet appropriate for her age.
- ✓ Exercise your cat regularly by engaging her with high-activity toys.

What to Watch For

An abnormal symptom in your pet could be just a minor or temporary issue, but it could also be the sign of serious illness or disease. Knowing when to seek veterinary help, and how urgently, is essential to taking care of your cat. Many diseases can cause cats to have a characteristic combination of symptoms, which together can be a clear signal that your Abyssinian needs help.

Office calls

Give us a call for an appointment if you notice any of these types of symptoms:

- ✓ Change in appetite or water consumption
- ✓ Tartar build-up, bad breath, red gums, or broken teeth
- ✓ Itchy skin (scratching, chewing, or licking), hair loss, or areas of shortened fur
- ✓ Lethargy, mental dullness, or excessive sleeping
- ✓ Fearfulness, aggression, or other behavioral changes
- ✓ Poor appetite, weight loss, lethargy, increased thirst and urination
- ✓ Limping, reluctance to jump when playing
- ✓ Lameness, abnormal hind limb gait, “bunny hopping”
- ✓ Areas of shortened hair or baldness; licking when stressed, anxious, or bored
- ✓ Broken whiskers or bald spots
- ✓ Episodes of agitation with rippling skin, crying, chewing at the skin

Emergencies

Seek medical care immediately if you notice any of these signs:

- ✓ Scratching or shaking the head, tender ears, or ear discharge
- ✓ Cloudiness, redness, itching, or any other abnormality involving the eyes
- ✓ Inability or straining to urinate; discolored urine

- ✓ Weakness or exercise intolerance; rapid, labored, or open-mouth breathing; sudden-onset of weakness
- ✓ Sudden hind leg weakness or paralysis, labored breathing, collapse, weakness on one side of the body
- ✓ Lethargy, pale gums

Partners in Health Care

DNA testing is a rapidly advancing field with new tests constantly emerging to help in the early diagnosis of inherited disease even before your cat shows symptoms. For the most up-to-date information on DNA and other screening tests available for your pal, visit www.wisdompanel.com.

Your Aby counts on you to take good care of her, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that she lives a long and healthy life. Our goal is to provide you both with the best health care possible: health care that's based on your pet's breed, lifestyle, and age. Please contact us when you have questions or concerns:

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Kitten to Adolescent Health Care Recommendations

How We'll Keep Your Abyssinian Healthy	Kitten to Adolescent: Infant to 27 in People Years			
	(✓)	Age	Services We'll Provide	Abyssinian-Specific Problems We're Looking For
	<input type="radio"/>	6–9 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Parasite detection/prevention Vaccinations Discuss socialization and at-home kitten care	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Dental alignment, heart murmur, hernia Progressive retinal atrophy
	<input type="radio"/>	10–13 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Parasite detection/prevention Vaccinations Discuss grooming basics, FIP susceptibility, and Cryptococcosis	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Progressive retinal atrophy
	<input type="radio"/>	14–16 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Parasite prevention Vaccinations Schedule spay/neuter surgery Discuss obedience	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Progressive retinal atrophy
	<input type="radio"/>	4–6 months	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Bone and joint exam Pre-surgical diagnostics Spay/neuter surgery Discuss microchipping and declaw options	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Progressive retinal atrophy Patellar luxation and Hip dysplasia
<input type="radio"/>	6 months through 2 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Oral health assessment Skin and coat exam Internal organ health evaluation Endocrine screening Bone and joint exam Blood disorder evaluation Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss lifetime genetic considerations	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Progressive retinal atrophy Gingivitis Psychogenic alopecia Nasopharyngeal polyps Amyloidosis Patellar luxation and Hip dysplasia Pyruvate kinase deficiency and Increased fragility of erythrocytes All major diseases important in the breed with diagnostic plan	

Adult to Golden Years Health Care Recommendations

How We'll Keep Your Abyssinian Healthy					Abyssinian-Specific Problems We're Looking For	
	(✓)	Age	Services We'll Provide			
	Adult: 28 to 43 in People Years	○	3 years through 6 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Oral health assessment Skin and coat exam Endocrine screening Bone and joint exam Neurological assessment Blood disorder evaluation Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss behavior and nutrition		Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Progressive retinal atrophy Gingivitis and Feline odontoclastic resorptive lesions (FORL) Psychogenic alopecia Amyloidosis Patellar luxation and Hip dysplasia Feline hyperesthesia syndrome Pyruvate kinase deficiency and Increased fragility of erythrocytes
	Senior: 44 to 54 in People Years	○	7 years through 10 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Oral health assessment Heart health check Skin and coat exam Internal organ health evaluation Endocrine screening Bone and joint exam Neurological assessment Blood disorder evaluation Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss mental and physical well-being		Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Progressive retinal atrophy Gingivitis and Feline odontoclastic resorptive lesions (FORL) Dilated cardiomyopathy and Arterial thromboembolism Psychogenic alopecia Feline lower urinary tract disease (FLUTD) and Kidney failure Amyloidosis Patellar luxation and Hip dysplasia Feline hyperesthesia syndrome Pyruvate kinase deficiency
Golden Years: 55+ in People Years	○	11 years and older	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Oral health assessment Heart health check Skin and coat exam Internal organ health evaluation Endocrine screening Bone and joint exam Neurological assessment Blood disorder evaluation Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss mental and physical well-being		Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Progressive retinal atrophy Gingivitis and Feline odontoclastic resorptive lesions (FORL) Dilated cardiomyopathy and Arterial thromboembolism Psychogenic alopecia Feline lower urinary tract disease (FLUTD) and Kidney failure Amyloidosis Patellar luxation and Hip dysplasia Feline hyperesthesia syndrome Pyruvate kinase deficiency	

Note: We recommend twice-a-year examinations so that we may diagnose problems sooner. This approach also gives you the budget-friendly option of spreading preventive testing over two visits rather than one.