

# Your Siamese

Caring for Your Faithful Companion



## Siamese: 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 Siamese and you expected her to have certain traits that would fit your lifestyle, like:

- May meow to communicate with you
- Energetic and playful
- A good companion and pet
- Good with children and other pets
- Has a short, easy-to-care-for coat
- Highly intelligent and able to learn tricks

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

- Very talkative, has an opinion about everything
- May want to constantly be involved in your activities
- People-oriented and should not be left alone for long periods of time

Is it all worth it? Of course! She's full of personality, and you love her for it! She is passionate about people and will involve herself in everything you are doing.

The Siamese was exported from Siam, now Thailand, in the late 1800's. They have striking blue eyes and an attractive two-toned coat. Siamese cats like to talk in their characteristic loud and low pitched voice. They are one of the most extroverted and social cats in the world, enjoying the company of people of all ages. They also get along well with other cats and dogs. Siamese are most intelligent, easily learning tricks such as fetching, walking on a leash and opening cabinets.



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## General Health Information for your Siamese

### *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 Siamese. Without extra

## Your Siamese'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 Siamese. By knowing about the health concerns common among Siamese, 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 Siamese 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 Siamese. 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 Siamese 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.

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, Siamese 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 Siamese'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 Siamese 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 Siamese

### *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.

### *Megaesophagus*

The esophagus is the tube that carries food from the mouth into the stomach by a series of contractions after swallowing. If the esophagus doesn't contract properly to move food down, however, it can become stretched out to "mega" size, so that food remains in the esophagus instead of going down into the stomach. Siamese affected by megaesophagus may throw up tube-shaped portions of undigested food. If your cat has any unusual eating behaviors or consistently vomits after eating, be sure to let us know. X-rays can help us determine if your pet has this condition, and special feeding postures, dietary modifications, and sometimes medications can be prescribed to help manage the problem. Unfortunately, cats with megaesophagus commonly inhale bits of food because of the esophagus's nearness to the windpipe and can consequently develop severe pneumonia, so it's important to diagnose megaesophagus and begin proper treatment early.

### *Multiple Cancers*

Cancer is a leading cause of death among cats in their golden years. Your Siamese is even more prone to certain kinds of cancer and to some kinds from a younger age. Many cancers can be cured by surgical removal of any masses and some types are treatable with chemotherapy. Early detection of every type of cancer is critical, so we'll do periodic blood tests and look for lumps and bumps on your pet at each exam.

- [Lymphoma](#) or lymphosarcoma is a type of cancer that afflicts Siamese more than other breeds. This disease causes the body to form abnormal lymphocytes, which are a type of white blood cell. Because white blood cells are found throughout the body, this cancer can show up almost anywhere. Lymphoma is a very treatable form of cancer, and chemotherapy in cats has shown an excellent success rate for recovery. Treatment can be costly, however, and is

a lifelong commitment. Luckily, lymphoma is one of the few types of cancer that can often be detected with a blood test, so we recommend a complete blood count twice yearly for your adult cat. Also watch for swollen glands (ask us, and we'll show you where to look), weight loss, or labored breathing, and be sure to call us if you notice any unusual symptoms in your pet.

- Siamese are also at higher risk for thymoma, which is a specific type of lymphoma that occurs inside the chest. Affected cats are usually young (often less than two years old), and they typically respond well to chemotherapy, with some cats gaining life-long remission. Although the mode of inheritance has not been confirmed, it is suspected to be autosomal recessive in nature, meaning that some normal cats may still carry the bad gene. Responsible breeders recommend that cats who are closely related to a known affected cat should not be used for breeding.
- **Mast cell tumors** are a particularly nasty type of skin cancer, and the sooner they are surgically removed the better. Unfortunately, mast cell tumors often look similar to many other kinds of skin lumps and lesions, so it's hard to know when to be concerned. Of all the skin problems found commonly in your Siamese, some may be harmful and some not, but any skin lump, bump, or irritation on your cat is cause enough for concern. All abnormalities should be checked out by the vet, and any suspicious or questionable growths should be surgically removed and tested as soon as possible. Many cancers can be cured by surgically removing their growths, so early evaluation of all skin abnormalities is critical.
- Cancer is a common problem in middle-aged and older cats, and while there are many different types of cancer, Siamese may be more susceptible to **adenocarcinoma**, a type of intestinal cancer, than other breeds. Adenocarcinoma tumors usually grow like a donut or lump wrapped around the intestines, which can eventually grow big enough to shut off the flow of intestinal contents. Affected cats may have sudden or severe vomiting, diarrhea, or blood in the stool. We may be able to detect the tumor during a routine physical examination, but an ultrasound of the abdomen is usually recommended to specifically diagnose adenocarcinoma and to help plan for the effective surgical removal of the tumor. Like with all types of cancer, early detection improves prognosis, so we recommend a complete physical exam twice a year.

### *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.

### *Convergent Strabismus and Nystagmus*

Convergent strabismus is the medical term for crossed eyes. While this may be considered a birth defect in most breeds, in the Siamese, it's considered normal. In some cases, you may even notice your cat's eyes flicking from side to side, a phenomenon called nystagmus. Neurologic studies have shown that these cats typically do not see double; their brains sort out all the extra information so that they see a unified image, just like cats without nystagmus. In any case, neither strabismus nor nystagmus is dangerous, and no treatment is needed. Many cat owners even find these traits endearing!

### *Progressive Retinal Atrophy*

**Progressive retinal atrophy (PRA)** is an inherited disease in some Siamese 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 Siamese 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 Siamese. 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.

### *Feline Asthma*

Asthma, which causes inflammation and narrowing of the small airways of the lungs, is fairly common in cats. Certain cat breeds, including your Siamese, are especially at risk. Asthma is a life-threatening condition that can require emergency treatment. Cats with asthma often have a wheezing cough; some owners may describe it as a “hairball cough,” but really when cats have a hairball, they typically don't cough, they vomit. Coughing is much more likely to be a serious problem in a cat than in a human or a dog, for example, and any cough that lasts longer than a day or recurs over time should be checked out. Cats with asthma can be treated with inhalers as well as oral medications that help open the airways and reduce inflammation. Prompt treatment is needed for wheezing, gasping, coughing or any sign of respiratory distress in your cat.

### *Wool Sucking*

Wool sucking is a term used for a cat's inclination to suckle on soft materials, even well after kittenhood. Siamese cats have a tendency to suck on blankets, soft fabrics, or even their tails! This behavior seems to be soothing, like when a baby sucks its thumb. In most cases, wool sucking isn't dangerous and does not require treatment.

### *Separation Anxiety Syndrome*

While the vast majority of felines prefer a solitary lifestyle, some Siamese can form unhealthy and excessive attachments to their owners. They can become so attached that when their human counterparts aren't around, they quickly become anxious or bored, leading to destructive behaviors such as paper shredding, vocalization, or litter box amnesia. Some cats may even exhibit aggressive behaviors when they know their owners are about to leave. To avoid the vices of boredom, make sure your cat has plenty of special toys or food puzzles to keep his mind and body active while he is left alone. A consistent daily routine and a stable home environment can also help prevent the troubles of separation anxiety. In severe cases, anti-anxiety medication may also be used to help keep your worried friend relaxed.

### *Routine Care, Diet, and Exercise*

Build your pet's routine care into your schedule to help your Siamese 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.
- ✓ Siamese have generally good teeth, and you can keep them perfect by brushing them at least twice 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 Siamese 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
- ✓ Asthmatic wheezing
- ✓

For great videos of coughing cats with asthma visit [www.fritzthebrave.com](http://www.fritzthebrave.com)

### **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
- ✓ Episodes of agitation with rippling skin, crying, chewing at the skin

## **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](http://www.wisdompanel.com).

Your Siamese 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 Siamese Healthy	Kitten to Adolescent: Infant to 27 in People Years	⌚	Age	Services We'll Provide	Siamese-Specific Problems We're Looking For
		○	6–9 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination  Eye disease screen Internal organ health evaluation Parasite detection/prevention Vaccinations Discuss socialization and at-home kitten care	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Dental alignment, heart murmur, hernia Convergent strabismus and Nystagmus Megacosophagus
		○	10–13 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Internal organ health evaluation Parasite detection/prevention Vaccinations Discuss grooming basics and wool sucking	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Convergent strabismus and Nystagmus Megacosophagus
		○	14–16 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Internal organ health evaluation Parasite prevention Vaccinations Schedule spay/neuter surgery Discuss obedience	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Convergent strabismus and Nystagmus Megacosophagus
		○	4–6 months	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Internal organ health evaluation Cancer screen Pre-surgical diagnostics Spay/neuter surgery Discuss microchipping, declaw options, and separation anxiety	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Convergent strabismus and Nystagmus Megacosophagus Mast cell tumor
		○	6 months through 2 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Internal organ health evaluation Endocrine screening Cancer screen Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss lifetime genetic considerations	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Progressive retinal atrophy (PRA) Asthma Amyloidosis Mast cell tumor and Lymphoma  All major diseases important in the breed with diagnostic plan

## Adult to Golden Years Health Care Recommendations

How We'll Keep Your Siamese Healthy	(√)	Age	Services We'll Provide	Siamese-Specific Problems We're Looking For
	<input type="radio"/>	3 years through 6 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Head-to-tail physical examination</li> <li>Eye disease screen</li> <li>Internal organ health evaluation</li> <li>Endocrine screening</li> <li>Neurological assessment</li> <li>Cancer screen</li> <li>Parasite prevention</li> <li>Vaccinations</li> <li>Discuss behavior and nutrition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus</li> <li>Progressive retinal atrophy (PRA)</li> <li>Asthma</li> <li>Amyloidosis</li> <li>Feline hyperesthesia syndrome</li> <li>Mast cell tumor and Lymphoma</li> </ul>
	<input type="radio"/>	7 years through 10 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Head-to-tail physical examination</li> <li>Eye disease screen</li> <li>Internal organ health evaluation</li> <li>Endocrine screening</li> <li>Neurological assessment</li> <li>Cancer screen</li> <li>Parasite prevention</li> <li>Vaccinations</li> <li>Discuss mental and physical well-being</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus</li> <li>Progressive retinal atrophy (PRA)</li> <li>Asthma</li> <li>Amyloidosis</li> <li>Feline hyperesthesia syndrome</li> <li>Mast cell tumor and Lymphoma</li> </ul>
	<input type="radio"/>	11 years and older	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Head-to-tail physical examination</li> <li>Eye disease screen</li> <li>Internal organ health evaluation</li> <li>Endocrine screening</li> <li>Neurological assessment</li> <li>Cancer screen</li>   <li>Parasite prevention</li> <li>Vaccinations</li> <li>Discuss mental and physical well-being</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus</li> <li>Progressive retinal atrophy (PRA)</li> <li>Asthma</li> <li>Amyloidosis</li> <li>Feline hyperesthesia syndrome</li> <li>Mast cell tumor, Lymphoma, Thymoma, and Small intestinal adenocarcinoma</li> </ul>

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.