

ASK OUR VETERINARIANS



Why Do Cats Go Crazy for Catnip?

What is it in catnip that drives some cats wild? The active ingredient in the catnip plant is an essential oil known as nepetalactone—quite a mouthful! This oil is thought to stimulate a pleasure center in the brain, and most cats will roll around on the fresh or dried plant and become very playful.

Cats who partake in catnip may become very chilled out after about 10 minutes of playing with the popular herb; however, some cats may become hyped up and a bit aggressive after contact with catnip, so use caution if your kitty acts like an angry “drunk” on the ‘nip!

Surprisingly, not all cats are sensitive to catnip. Only about 50% of cats express the gene that makes them respond to the oil in this plant that is a relative of mint and other fragrant herbs like oregano and basil. Kittens under twelve weeks of age lack any response to catnip altogether, so you won’t know if your kitty has inherited the ability to respond to the scent until he or she is three months old.

Many clients ask if catnip is safe and if it is OK if their cat eats it. The answer is yes, catnip is a perfectly safe treat for your kitty and it is indeed edible. So, if your cat goes crazy for catnip, by all means let him or her indulge!

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