

Your Exotic Shorthair

Caring for Your Faithful Companion



PET MEDICAL CENTER

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Your Exotic Shorthair

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

- Has a quiet or soft voice
- Lively, with a friendly personality
- Good with children and other pets
- Loyal and loving companion

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

- People-oriented and should not be left alone for long periods of time
- Coat requires regular brushing and grooming
- Prone to a number of health problems
- Prone to separation anxiety

Is it all worth it? Of course! She's full of personality, and you love her for it! Playful, affectionate, and social, she makes an excellent family companion.

Wishing to create a shorthaired variant of the Persian, breeders crossed Persians with British Shorthairs and other shorthaired breeds to create the Exotic Shorthair. First recognized as its own breed in 1967, the Exotic retains the affectionate, easy going attitude of the Persian and gained the easier coat maintenance and higher energy levels of her shorthaired cousins. The Exotic Shorthair won't demand a lot of attention, but she is a playful entertainer which makes her an excellent companion for families with multiple pets and children.



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Your Exotic Shorthair'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 Exotic. By knowing about the health concerns common among Exotic Shorthairs, 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 Exotic Shorthairs 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 Exotic Shorthairs. 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 Exotic Shorthair 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 Exotic Shorthair

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 Exotic. 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, Exotic Shorthairs 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.



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a disease that affects brachycephalic cats – nose with a snort nose and flat face—such as your Exotic Shorthair. Although these cats have the same amount of tissue in their noses and throats as other breeds of cats, the flattened features provide less space for the tissue to grow. Consequently, the soft palate, the soft area in the back of the roof of the mouth, grows too long for the mouth and hangs down into the airway. The nostrils are also often too small, and sometimes the trachea, or windpipe, is narrow and undersized. All of these elements contribute to a narrow and obstructed airway in cats with brachycephalic syndrome. Many affected cats can barely breathe normally; many have sleep apnea and snore, have chronic respiratory infections, and develop swelling and congestion in their throats, which only worsens the problem. Brachycephalic syndrome cats are also more prone to heat stroke and have a higher risk for anesthetic complications. Many cats with this syndrome die at an early age, but correcting the defects through surgery as soon as possible,

Your Basset Hound

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ideally at the time of spaying or neutering, can help your pet live a long and normal life. With surgery, the long soft palate can be shortened, the nostrils can be snipped open, and more regular breathing can be restored. Some brachycephalic syndrome cats are not severely affected early on, but may develop more serious problems as they get older, in which case surgery can be done at that time.

Cataract

Cataracts are a common cause of blindness in older Exotics. Onset of the disease presents with the lenses of the eyes becoming more opaque, or more cloudy than clear. Surgery to remove cataracts and restore the cat's sight may be an option, although most cats adjust well to gradually losing their vision and still get along well in life. We will always examine your cat's eyes closely at each biannual exam and will discuss treatment options with you if your cat develops cataracts.

Eyelid Agenesis

Eyelid agenesis is a birth defect in which the upper eyelid does not form properly. This malformation leaves the eye constantly vulnerable to foreign materials contacting the cornea, like dust, eyelashes, and hair. In addition, the eye is never properly hydrated, and remains irritated, red, and dry as a result. Over time, this irritation causes painful corneal ulcers and scar tissue to develop, eventually leading to partial or complete blindness. In mild cases, treatment may include the application of eye lubricant and cryosurgery to remove the eyelashes rubbing the eye. Usually though, affected cats are treated through surgical eyelid reconstruction. Once healed, the new eyelids should function normally, and the cat should be able to live a healthy life with normal vision.

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.

Polycystic Kidney Disease

Polycystic kidney disease (PKD) is caused by a defective gene. The disease was first recognized in Persians, and is seen occasionally in other breeds, including Exotic Shorthairs. Affected kittens are born with miniscule cysts inside the kidneys and sometimes the liver that slowly enlarge over time, eventually destroying the affected organ. Symptoms usually become apparent around seven years of age on average. These symptoms include weight loss, vomiting, excessive thirst, and poor overall health. There is no cure for PKD, although special diets and medication can slow the progress of the resulting organ failure; diagnosing PKD as early as possible may allow effective support of kidney and liver function for years. Routine annual urine or blood testing is therefore recommended to monitor for early organ dysfunction in all adult cats. If PKD is indicated, an ultrasound exam of the abdomen may be performed to visualize the cysts and assess the current damage. A genetic test for PKD is also available, and responsible breeders recommend that cats who carry the PKD gene should not be used for breeding.

Hip Dysplasia

Most commonly seen in dogs, hip dysplasia may also occur in cats, especially in Exotic Shorthairs. 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.

Portosystemic Shunt

Portosystemic shunt is a disorder seen occasionally in cats, in which some of the blood supply to the liver is shunted around it instead. This condition deprives the liver of the full blood flow it needs to grow and function properly, leading to an undersized, poorly nourished liver that cannot fully remove toxins from the bloodstream. These unfiltered waste materials, such as ammonia and bile acids, eventually build up in the bloodstream and act as poisons to the body's systems. For example, in severe cases, high blood-ammonia levels can cause neurological issues. Cats affected by a portosystemic shunt are also extremely sensitive to drugs and anesthetics, as the liver cannot efficiently cleanse the bloodstream of the added chemicals. If your cat shows symptoms of a portosystemic shunt, we will perform blood testing or a liver ultrasound scan can to check for the disorder. In some cases, surgery can restore proper blood flow to the liver.

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. Exotic Shorthairs 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.

FeLV Susceptibility

Feline leukemia virus, or FeLV, is a virus that can cause anemia, susceptibility to other infections, and various types of cancers. FeLV is a fatal disease, though many cats live for years before symptoms emerge. Fortunately, we can give your cat the FeLV vaccine every year to help protect against infection; prior to the first vaccination, your cat should be tested in order to ensure that the disease is not already present. All kittens should also be tested for FeLV and for Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) as well after about 12 weeks of age. Five to ten percent of cats are carriers for FeLV or FIV, and some cat breeds seem to be more prone to infection than others. All adult cats should be tested before breeding as well since the virus is spread via mating and from mother to kittens. Cats that go outdoors should be re-tested regularly or vaccinated yearly as the disease can also be transmitted by fighting with other cats.

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.

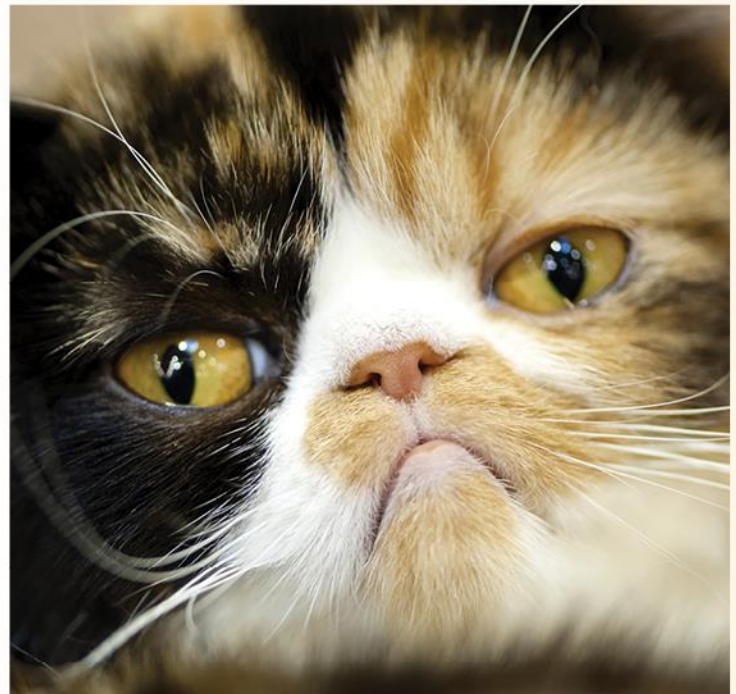
Just like people, individual cats have different blood types. Most domestic cats have type A blood, but purebred cats, like your Exotic Shorthair often have a different blood type, usually type B or very rarely, type AB. Determining your cat's blood type is essential before starting a transfusion, so 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 Exotic Shorthair. If you plan to breed your cat, you will need to learn more about this problem beforehand from your veterinarian.

Separation Anxiety Syndrome

While the vast majority of felines prefer a solitary lifestyle, some Exotic Shorthairs 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.

Dystocia

Dystocia is a term that means difficulty giving birth. In some breeds, nearly all litters must be delivered by Cesarean-section surgery as normal birth is not possible due to the breed's specific physical characteristics. While breeding any cat requires a serious commitment to learning about and preparing for that breed's preventable problems, professional breeders warn that proper Exotic Shorthair breeding can be costly and carries a higher risk of death for both the mother and kittens than in other breeds.

Taking Care of Your Exotic Shorthair 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 Exotics. 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 Exotic Shorthair 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.
- ✓ Exotic Shorthairs 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 is prone to obesity, so be sure to watch her weight.
- ✓ Wash her face regularly with a damp cloth to keep tears from staining her face.
- ✓ 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 Exotic Shorthair 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
- ✓ Lameness, abnormal hind limb gait, "bunny hopping"
- ✓ Abnormal behaviors, particularly worse a few hours after meals
- ✓ Lethargy; weight loss; chronic or recurrent infections, especially upper respiratory infections or gingivitis

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
- ✓ Noisy or labored breathing



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.Genesis4Pets.com.

Your Exotic 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:

Pet Medical Center
254-690-6769

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Kitten to Adolescent Health Care Recommendations

How We'll Keep Your Exotic Shorthair Healthy	Kitten to Adolescent: Infant to 27 in People Years	⌚	Age	Services We'll Provide	Shorthair-Specific Problems We're Looking For
		○	6–9 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Oral health assessment Heart health check Parasite detection/prevention Vaccinations Discuss socialization and at-home kitten care	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Dental alignment, heart murmur, hernia Cataracts and Eyelid agenesis Brachycephalic syndrome Portosystemic shunt
		○	10–13 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Oral health assessment Heart health check Parasite detection/prevention Vaccinations Discuss grooming basics, FIP susceptibility, and FeLV susceptibility	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts and Eyelid agenesis Brachycephalic syndrome Portosystemic shunt
		○	14–16 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Oral health assessment Heart health check Parasite prevention Vaccinations Schedule spay/neuter surgery Discuss obedience	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts and Eyelid agenesis Brachycephalic syndrome Portosystemic shunt
		○	4–6 months	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Oral health assessment Heart health check Bone and joint exam Pre-surgical diagnostics Spay/neuter surgery Discuss microchipping, declaw options, and separation anxiety	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts and Eyelid agenesis Brachycephalic syndrome Portosystemic shunt Hip dysplasia
		○	6 months through 2 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Oral health assessment Internal organ health evaluation Bone and joint exam Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss lifetime genetic considerations	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts Brachycephalic syndrome Polycystic kidney disease Hip dysplasia All major diseases important in the breed with diagnostic plan

Adult to Golden Years Health Care Recommendations

How We'll Keep Your Exotic Shorthair		Age	Services We'll Provide	Shorthair-Specific Problems We're Looking For
		Adult: 28 to People Year	7 years through 10 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Oral health assessment Heart health check Internal organ health evaluation Bone and joint exam Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss behavior and nutrition
Senior: 44 to 54 in People Years	7 years through 10 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Oral health assessment Heart health check Internal organ health evaluation Bone and joint exam Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss mental and physical well-being 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts Brachycephalic syndrome Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM) Polycystic kidney disease and Feline lower urinary tract disease (FLUTD) Hip dysplasia 	
Golden Years: 55+ in People Years	11 years and older	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Oral health assessment Heart health check Internal organ health evaluation Bone and joint exam Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss mental and physical well-being 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts Brachycephalic syndrome Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM) Polycystic kidney disease and Feline lower urinary tract disease (FLUTD) Hip dysplasia 	

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.