



## Taking the Temperature in a Kitten or Puppy

It is not reliable or recommended to predict the temperature in a kitten or puppy by human “touch.” The body temperature of kittens and puppies varies from our normal temperature of 98.6°F, so they can feel warm or cold to us, yet still have a normal body temperature for their age. Being able to take the temperature in a kitten or puppy is tricky, but with proper instruction and assistance it can safely be done.

### What is a Normal Kitten and Puppy Temperature?

- Neonatal kittens and puppies (kittens and puppies between 0-4 weeks of age) need assistance maintaining their normal body temperature, either from their mother’s body heat or from a heat source such as a Snuggle Safe® disc. If their body temperature drops, they can have problems with digestion and become stressed, making them susceptible to illness. If their body temperature increases, it can be an indication of poor health.
- The body temperature in a neonatal kitten or puppy is normally less than an adult cat or dog, and they have a normal range to their body temperature. This is due to their size and their surface area to body mass ratio.
- See the [Maddie’s® Fund Neonatal Kitten and Puppy Temperature Chart](#).
- The normal body temperature in a newborn kitten or puppy ranges from 95-99°F.
- The normal body temperature in a kitten or puppy between 2-3 weeks old ranges from 97-100°F.
- The normal body temperature of a 4-week old kitten or puppy ranges from 99-101°F.
- After 4 weeks, the normal body temperature of a kitten or puppy starts to reach a normal adult cat or dog temperature range of 100.5-102.5°F.

### When Should the Temperature Be Taken in a Kitten or Puppy?

- When first acquiring orphaned neonates.
- Periodically during your care of orphaned neonates. This will allow you to check that they are stable.
- Anytime your kitten or puppy is not nursing or not eating.



- Anytime your kitten or puppy is listless.
- Anytime your kitten or puppy is restless or seems to be crying a lot.
- And finally, anytime you suspect illness or are concerned.

## How to Take the Temperature in a Kitten or Puppy

- First, gather all your supplies - they should be easily at hand. You will need...
  - A small tipped, quick read, digital rectal thermometer. Do not use a glass one, as glass can break
  - Lubrication (Vaseline, or sterile lubricant) to cover the tip of the thermometer so the tip slides into the rectum easily. Without lubricant, the tip can drag and potentially harm the delicate tissue and certainly cause discomfort.
  - Towels.
  - An assistant, if one is available.
- If needed, you can put a towel on your lap to give your kitten or puppy something soft and flat to stand on.
- If your kitten or puppy is too squirmy, gently wrap him or her in a towel, making a kitty or puppy burrito.
- If your kitten or puppy is too stressed, ask for help from a veterinary assistant or technician, or a veterinarian.
- Second, lube your thermometer.
- Then position your kitten or puppy. You can use one of your hands to hold your kitten or puppy, or you can use an assistant.
- Then gently elevate the tail.
  - Then carefully insert the thermometer's tip into the rectum – no more than ¾" for small kittens and puppies, 1" to 1 ¼" for larger kittens and puppies.
- Do not force the thermometer in. If the thermometer doesn't easily advance, your kitten or puppy may have stool blocking the way and forcing the thermometer could cause a tear in the delicate rectal tissue.
- If the thermometer slides in easily, wait for the beep, while keeping your kitten or puppy quiet. Move the thermometer as your kitten or puppy moves, to avoid injury.
- After the beep, read the temperature and record it with the date and time it was taken.
- Lastly, give your little patient a cuddle to make up for the ordeal.

