







## CAT OVERSTIMULATION

*Cat overstimulation happens when a cat becomes overly excited or agitated during petting or other forms of physical contact, leading to biting or scratching. Cats who get overstimulated often show signs that they WANT the attention, and then they get overwhelmed and conflicted and don't know what to do about it once they're getting it. This can be confusing for someone when a cat is rubbing up against them or otherwise asking for attention and seems to be enjoying affection and then bites. Understanding their triggers and how to manage overstimulation can keep your cat comfortable and the humans safe from bites.*

### RECOGNIZING THE WARNING SIGNS

Cats typically give subtle cues before they become overstimulated. Learn to recognize these signals in your cat to help prevent going too far. These signs may include:

-  INCREASED TAIL FLICKING/TWITCHING
-  DILATED PUPILS
-  FLATTENED EARS
-  SKIN TWITCHING
-  THE BODY TENSING OR FREEZING
-  THE CAT MAKING A QUICK TURN OF THEIR HEAD TO WATCH YOUR HAND AS YOU'RE PETTING THEM

### HOW TO HANDLE IT

**LIMIT PETTING TIME** Pay attention to how long your cat can tolerate petting before showing signs of overstimulation. Limit the duration of petting sessions to avoid pushing your cat past their comfort zone. For cats who get overstimulated quickly, restrict yourself to only a few brief pets and then stop to limit them getting over threshold. Some cats may tolerate five minutes of petting, while others may only be able to tolerate just a few strokes. Once you figure out their limit, make sure to stick to that or less.

### WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU ARE PETTING

**FOCUS ON PREFERRED AREAS** Some cats have specific areas they enjoy being petted, such as the head or chin. Stick to these areas and avoid sensitive spots like the belly or tail, which may trigger overstimulation.

**GENTLE TOUCH** Use gentle and slow strokes during petting. Avoid fast, rough, or heavy-handed petting, which can be overstimulating.

**PAUSE AND OBSERVE** Periodically pause during petting to gauge your cat's comfort level. If they show signs of agitation, stop petting and give them space to calm down.

**INTERACTIVE PLAY** If your cat becomes overstimulated, redirect their energy into interactive play using toys. This can help release their pent-up energy in a more appropriate way.

**CONSISTENCY** Be consistent in your approach to petting and handling. Cats thrive on routines, and knowing what to expect can reduce anxiety and overstimulation.

### **IF THIS BEHAVIOR IS ESCALATING OR CAUSING ISSUES...**

**CONSULT A VETERINARIAN** If your cat's overstimulation behavior is severe or seems to be escalating, consult with a veterinarian to rule out any underlying medical issues. In some cases, overstimulation can be a sign of discomfort or pain.

**CONSULT A PROFESSIONAL** If overstimulation continues to be a problem, consider consulting with a professional animal behaviorist or a certified cat behavior consultant for personalized guidance and training.