



Information About Declawing Cats

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Declawing is performed by either amputating the last digit of the cat's toes or by severing the tendons attached to the cat's claws. After declawing, 25% of cats develop physical complications and many more develop behavior issues related to the declaw surgery and recovery. Operation Kindness does not recommend declawing of cats for the following reasons:

- Declawed cats are at an increased risk of injury or death from other animals since they are unable to defend themselves or climb certain surfaces. Even declawing a cat only in the front puts the cat at risk. Many people mistakenly believe that a cat can protect itself by kicking with its back feet but what they don't realize is that in order for the cat to use this method, they must be in a very vulnerable position.
- It is a cat's natural instinctual behavior to use their claws to climb, exercise, stretch and mark their territory.
- Declawed cats often resort to biting to protect themselves.
- Cats are often abandoned after declawing due to the development of unwanted behavior problems after their surgery.
- Many declawed cats develop litter box aversion. After the declaw surgery, the cat's paws are very raw and when the cat goes to use the box, digging in the litter causes the cat a lot of pain. Cats will begin to associate the box with that pain and may never use it again. It is not uncommon for declawed cat owners to trade scratched furniture or urine-soaked carpeting.
- If you opt for the tendonectomy, the cat's claws will still need to be trimmed regularly.
- In some cases, the bone will try to grow back abnormally under the skin. This can cause the cat great amounts of pain.
- In either type of surgery, since the tendons are severed, the joints will stiffen and then toes can no longer be extended. Cats may continue to "scratch" after they are declawed, this is probably explained by the cat's desperate desire to stretch their stiff, contracted joints and not evidence that the cat misses its claws.
- A declawed cat may begin to shift their weight onto the large middle pad of their feet and off of their toes. This altered gait may persist over time and can cause stress on the leg joints and spine and could lead to arthritis.

Read our tips on Destructive Scratching for more information about humane alternatives to declawing.

For behavior and training advice, please contact Operation Kindness at behavior@operationkindness.org or visit www.operationkindness.org/training.