

What is Pica?

By

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Pica is the persistent craving and compulsive eating of non-food substances. Pica can occur in kittens as young as two weeks of age and is often seen in kittens chewing their bedding or litter. Pica usually disappears as kittens grow into adulthood. Common materials are wool or synthetic fabrics, but some cats seem to target particular textures like rubber, wood, leather, plastic, cellophane, paper or cardboard. Studies have shown that the act of sucking/chewing may cause a chemical to be released in the brain that produces a feeling of intense pleasure and calm, which then becomes addictive. Pica is seen in cats that have more restricted lifestyles, living mainly indoors and having personalities that interfere with the ability to handle stress. This can cause medical problems when ingested foreign material needs to be surgically removed or behavioural issues when an owner's valued objects are destroyed. Behavioural modification is often required to address this problem.

