

## Why Does My Cat Sleep so Much?

Is it normal for kitties to spend more time asleep than awake? How many hours a day is the norm, and what can lead your cat to catch even more zzz's? Know the sleeping positions that may indicate your pet is experiencing pain, has a medical issue or simply wants to feel more secure.

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### STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- As both predator and prey, cats are designed by nature to require lots of sleep to build the energy stores necessary to live their best lives
- There are many reasons it may seem your cat sleeps a lot, including a penchant for short vs. long snoozes, a need to top off her energy reserves, the feline body clock, boredom, stress, or illness or injury
- Cats also adopt many different sleeping positions, such as curled up in a ball, on the back of the couch or atop the fridge, and even on their favorite human's head
- If your cat's sleeping patterns change drastically or you notice other signs of possible illness or injury (e.g., sleeping in the litterbox), it's important to make an appointment with your veterinarian

If it seems your feline family member spends more time asleep than awake, it's not your imagination! The fact is, most cats sleep anywhere from 12 to 18 hours a day, while close to 40% sleep more than 18 hours a day.<sup>1</sup> And while humans usually sleep in one long stretch at night, the feline sleep pattern is polyphasic, involving multiple sleep sessions each day and night.

Each time your cat falls asleep, he's likely to snooze for 50 to 113 minutes, with an average of 78 minutes, though this can vary significantly.<sup>2</sup> Further, unlike humans, who have a diurnal sleep cycle that predisposes us to be awake during the day and asleep at night, cats are crepuscular animals, meaning they tend to be most active at dawn and dusk, during the twilight hours.

As predators in the wild, they're awake just before sunrise to hunt diurnal birds, and at sunset, to prey on nocturnal animals.<sup>3</sup>

Bottom line: as both a predatory and prey animal, nature has designed the feline species to require lots of sleep to build the energy stores necessary to hunt, explore, catch prey, and escape from predators.

### Catnap Triggers

The amount of time your cat spends sleeping depends on several factors, including life stage. Growing, developing kittens need up to 20 hours of sleep per day, while adult cats can get by on 15 hours or less. And like many senior humans, senior kitties tend to spend more time napping than younger adults. Other factors that can influence a cat's sleep requirements include breed, diet, and lifestyle. Why you often find your little fluffer catching some z's:

- **Catnaps vs. longer sleep sessions** — Cats don't tend to sleep for long periods, so several naps that last 15 to 30 minutes are beneficial. A nice catnap rests both body and mind, while also allowing kitty to react quickly to potential threats in the environment.
- **Energy replenishment** — In the wild, cats expend a ton of energy hunting, playing, exploring, and avoiding predators. Sleep allows them to rebuild their energy stores for whatever comes next.
- **Feline body rhythms** — As noted earlier, cats are naturally most active at dawn and dusk, so it could be your cat is snoozing away the day because he's up most of the night. More than a few bleary-eyed cat guardians have been rudely awakened.
- **Boredom** — Many indoor-only cats are bored out of their minds, and sleeping is often the least problematic behavior they engage in. Check out [How to Give Your Indoor Cat the Best of Both Worlds](#) for tips and ideas for providing your kitty with regular supervised adventures outdoors, and an optimal (stress-free and enriched) environment indoors.
- **Stress** — Like many humans, cats who feel stressed or anxious may sleep more than normal.
- **Illness or injury** — Cats who feel sick or painful often tend to sleep more. If this is the case with your pet, you'll typically notice additional signs of a problem, such as lack of appetite or mobility issues. But even if you don't, it's important to call your veterinarian if your cat is sleeping much more than normal.

## Top 20 Cat Sleeping Positions

1. **Curled up in a ball** — This cozy position keeps your kitty warm while also protecting the vital organs in her abdomen.
2. **On his back** — Sleeping belly up, with vital organs exposed, indicates your cat feels safe and confident. But rub his belly at your own risk; he may try to defend himself if you do.
3. **Side sleeper** — This is another position that indicates your cat is comfortable and confident, since her vulnerable organs are also exposed.
4. **Loaf position** — If your cat is sleeping with his front paws tucked under his body and his head upright, similar to a loaf of bread, he's preserving body heat while keeping vital organs protected. This position allows him to move quickly if threatened. If he sleeps only in this position he may have abdominal pain.
5. **Superman pose** — This means your cat's front legs and paws are outstretched in front and the back legs are stretched out behind. It's a relaxed position that can keep your kitty warm (if laying on a blanket) or cool (if laying on a hardwood or tile floor). Plus, his belly is fully protected.
6. **Perched in a high-up spot** — Cats often sleep on the back of a couch or on top of a refrigerator. This gives them a bird's eye view of their surroundings and keeps them safe from "predators," such as other pets, small children or strange visitors.
7. **Awkward positions** — If your cat is sleeping in a strange, twisted position, it may look uncomfortable to you. But remember that cats are extremely flexible, so it's probably comfy for your kitty.
8. **Sitting upright** — Sleeping in an upright position indicates your cat feels secure in her surroundings. It's also an ideal position for grooming the belly between short dozes.
9. **On your chest** — Kitties who are bonded with their owners may sleep on their chests. It's a warm place to lay, and they may enjoy hearing their human's heartbeat or voice.
10. **Next to you** — Sleeping near you shows that your cat trusts you; he's willing to be vulnerable in your presence.

11. **On your head** — Sleeping on your head is a way for your cat to be near you without being disturbed, since your head moves less than the rest of your body while you sleep. Plus, it's a convenient spot to be when she decides to wake you up for a snack. It's also possible that she's sleeping on your head because she likes the pillow you're lying on.
12. **On your feet** — Your cat probably likes your warmth and wants to be near you. But by laying by your feet, he can make a quick escape if he needs some space.
13. **Between your legs** — This is a cozy, nest-like spot for your cat to feel safe in. It also provides extra security because she can easily leave when she wants to.
14. **In a box** — Cats enjoy boxes for the security they provide. Sleeping in a box is similar to sleeping in a tent for a human. It makes kitty feel safe but also allows for an easy exit if necessary.
15. **In the litterbox** — Most cats don't choose to sleep in their litterbox, unless they're in an animal shelter with very limited space. If you find your cat there, seek veterinary care, as there's likely an underlying medical issue, such as a urinary tract infection or digestive problem.
16. **Eyes half open or open** — This can be normal for cats but can also be a sign of a medical issue, especially if it's accompanied by eye swelling, squinting, eye discharge or a visible third eyelid.
17. **Paws covering eyes** — This adorable sleeping position has a practical side. It provides extra warmth while blocking light and keeping out environmental contaminants.
18. **With other cats** — Many cats enjoy sleeping with one another because they're bonded, enjoy the warmth their friends provide, and may also find their purrs to be soothing.
19. **With a dog** — If your cat is bonded with a dog in your home, they may sleep side-by-side for the same reason many animals sleep together — for warmth, safety, and companionship.
20. **Tucked under the covers** — If you find your cat sleeping soundly under the covers, she's likely enjoying the warmth, security, and escape from loud noises.

## Sources and References

[PetMD March 17, 2023](#)

[1, 2, 3 Sleep Foundation, April 20, 2022](#)

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