**The importance of grooming your cat**

Most [cats](http://www.examiner.com/cats) love to be brushed. If they do not, there may be a medical reason, such as sensitivity along the spine or hips, or [skin](http://www.examiner.com/topic/skin) irritations. Brushing keeps excess shedding at bay, stimulates blood flow, and provides a social means of bonding with your cat. Many cats love to have their cheeks brushed as well. The scent glands in the cheeks release pheromones when rubbed. These scent molecules calm cats. The smell of pheromones also communicates other information between cats, which is why cats like to rub their cheeks on walls, furniture, legs, etc.—to “mark” their territory.

Brushing your cat daily, even for a just few minutes, keeps the coat shiny and tidy. Cats appreciate the help. Can you imagine having to bathe yourself with your tongue? Long hair cats in particular should have ample attention given to maintaining their coats. Mats can accumulate quickly if not monitored. Mats that get too close to the skin pull on the skin, can be painful, and create sores or lesions. Brushing routinely also gives you, the guardian, the opportunity to monitor for [fleas](http://www.examiner.com/topic/fleas), flea dirt, lumps, bumps, scratches, changes in weight, or muscle structure. Early detection of changes leads to the best chance for keeping your pet healthy.

As pets get older, they may need additional help grooming. Arthritis may decrease their flexibility and therefore willingness to get to hard to reach places. Obesity severely limits a cat’s ability to groom thoroughly and is a very sad and preventable disease with many dire consequences. Kidney disease, nausea, and oral disease such as inflamed gums may hamper the ability of cats to groom.

As with training and other types of bonding, brushing and toenail trims are best implemented as a routine from an early age. Most cats have polite etiquette and coordination with their claws if encouraged to use scratching posts. Some cats, on the other paw, get their claws caught in carpeting or do not manicure their nails appropriately and can have them over grow. Claws that grow into the pads of the feet are extremely painful and can cause severe infections and lameness.