

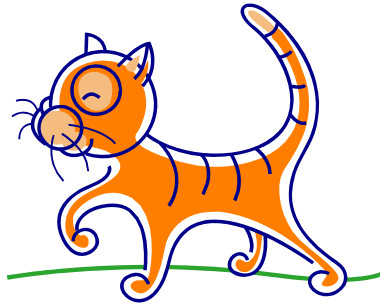
Ask Dr. Jyl:

Declawing and Alternate Methods

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Dr. Jyl,

My cat is constantly scratching the furniture. I would like to have him declawed, but I recently heard of an alternative procedure to remove cat's claws. Can you describe each procedure or recommend an alternative approach?



Dear Nadine,

There are several options and/or procedures to resolve your problem.

There are two surgical procedures veterinarians can perform to resolve the scratching problems.

The first procedure is called an **onychectomy** or simply a **declaw**. Cats have three bones in their toes. The claw grows from the end of the last bone. While under general anesthesia, the veterinarian amputates the end section off the last bone along with the nail. Then the toe is sutured or skin glued and wrapped. Pain medication is administered for 3-5 days. Recovery time is approximately 2-5 days.

Another procedure is called a **Flexor Tendonectomy**. While performing this under a general anesthesia this procedure involves making a small incision into the paw above the pad. The tendon is exposed and severed. This prevents the cat from extending their claw and scratching. The toe and nail are not amputated in this procedure. With this procedure there is less recovering time and less chance of arthritis later on. Pain medication may be administered after the procedure for several days.

After a tendonectomy owners should monitor their cat's nails and trim them on a regular basis. This must be done because the cat no longer can contract their nails due to the tendon being cut.

There are also non-surgical treatments to help alleviate the scratching issues.

Soft Paws are small slipcovers, which go over the nail and are glued on temporarily. This requires no surgical intervention however, the nail covers usually need to be replaced and reglued every 4-6 weeks. There is no recovery time or pain medication needed.

Training your cat may be helpful although it can be difficult and time consuming. Sometimes scratching posts and toys help with this behavior. Ask your veterinarian or consult a pet behaviorist for training tips.

As a cat owner, you are faced with making a decision on what is best for your cat. Discuss these options with your veterinarian as it may be beneficial.