FOOD & PLANTS

Can Cats Eat Chicken? Cooked Yes; Raw Meat and Bones No

Plain cooked chicken with no skin or bones is a good treat, up to about 2 tablespoons a day for an adult cat. Raw meat can carry Salmonella, and bones can choke a cat or injure its gut.

By Catt County Cat Nippers • Reviewed October 28, 2026 • 4 min read • 6 cited sources

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The short answer

Yes, cooked and plain. Cats are obligate carnivores: Cornell's Feline Health Center explains that they need nutrients found in meat. Chicken is high in protein and essential amino acids, and most cats love it, which makes plain cooked chicken almost an ideal treat, PetMD's veterinarian says.

Raw chicken and other raw meat are a different matter. The ASPCA warns they can carry bacteria such as Salmonella and E. coli, harmful to pets and to the people who handle them.

And never give bones, cooked or raw.

Chicken at a glance

CHICKEN FOR CATS, DISH BY DISH

Chicken	For a cat?	Why
Plain baked or boiled chicken, skin and bones off	Yes	The way PetMD recommends serving it
Canned chicken	Now and then	Often salty and sometimes spiced: plain, rinsed well, and only a little (PetMD)
Rotisserie chicken	Plain meat only	Take meat off the bone, and skip it if it was cooked with onion or garlic (ASPCA)

Chicken	For a cat?	Why
Chicken skin	No	PetMD advises taking it off before serving
Fried chicken and nuggets	No	Spices, breading and fat: empty calories for a cat (PetMD)
Chicken broth	Homemade and plain only	Store broth is often salty or flavored with spices that can be toxic (PetMD)
Raw chicken	No	Can carry Salmonella and Campylobacter, which can pass to people (PetMD)
Bones, cooked or raw	Never	They can choke a cat, splinter, or block its gut (PetMD, ASPCA)

All treats together should stay under about 10% of the day's calories (AAHA, PetMD).

How to prepare chicken for a cat

1. Cook it thoroughly, as you would for yourself: bake or boil it completely plain, with no spices, butter or breading (PetMD).
2. Let it cool, then take off the skin and every bone (PetMD).
3. Cut it into small, bite-sized pieces and serve it as a treat, or on top of your cat's usual food (PetMD).
4. Keep portions small: up to about 2 teaspoons a day for a kitten under 6 months, and up to about 2 tablespoons a day for an older cat (PetMD).
5. Wash your hands, cutting board and knife after handling raw chicken: bacteria from raw meat spread easily to hands and surfaces (FDA).

This quick sheet is the start of the guide. Still to read: Why bones are dangerous, Raw chicken and raw diets, Keep meals complete and 1 more section, plus the What Cats Can & Can't Eat Chart. Read it all free when you join our pet health emails at cattcountycatnippers.org/articles/can-cats-eat-chicken

Sources

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