

based on semantics, and whether you tend to be a “lumper” or a “splitter.” Lumpers prefer to group some stages together into a larger category, while splitters prefer to subdivide the stages. The only common ground among all the versions is the first life stage: kitten.

The updated age-comparison chart mentioned above also describes the life stages of a cat, dividing it into six distinct stages:

- Kitten: 0 to 6 months**
- Junior: 7 months to 2 years**
- Prime: 3 to 6 years**
- Mature: 7 to 10 years**
- Senior: 11 to 14 years**
- Geriatric: 15 years and older**

Splitters were probably happy with this six-stage version, although as a cat veterinarian, I had mixed feelings. I never knew exactly where to draw the line between “adult” and “senior.” Dividing older cats into “mature,” “senior” and “geriatric” categories based on these age ranges seemed sensible. However, dividing younger adult cats into “junior” and “prime” felt a bit contrived.

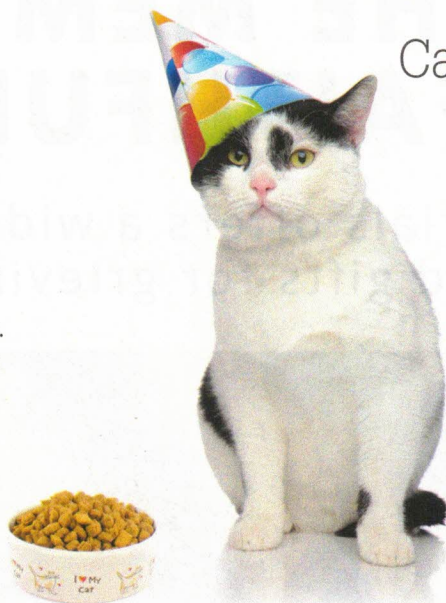
In a recently updated (2021) report, the AAFP/AAHA described four basic age-related feline life stages:

- Kitten: birth to 1 year**
- Young adult: 1 to 6 years**
- Mature adult: 7 to 10 years**
- Senior: Older than 10 years**

If you’re a lumper, you probably love this streamlined version. I’m content with the first three categories and their associated age ranges; however, I feel that the senior stage should be further divided, resulting in a five-stage classification that, in my opinion, covers all the bases:

- Kitten: birth to 1 year**
- Young adult: 1 to 6 years**
- Mature adult: 7 to 10 years**
- Senior: 11 to 15 years**
- Geriatric: 16 years and older**

I’ve seen variations of the versions described above, but with the term



“super senior” replacing the term “geriatric.” I suspect some people feel that the word geriatric is too clinical, or that it carries negative connotations. As a veterinarian, I prefer the term geriatric, although I understand why cat parents would fancy the term super senior, as it invokes awe and wonder and makes the cat sound like a superhero, which is a pretty cool concept.

Finding the right care for your cat at each stage

The main reason veterinarians divide a cat’s life into stages is to help us formulate health and wellness plans that are appropriate for that particular life stage. The illnesses and behavioral changes we’re likely to encounter, and the diagnostic tests that are recommended, will differ depending on these stages. Whether you, as a cat parent, prefer the four-stage classification (kitten, young adult, mature adult, senior), a five-stage version (kitten, young adult, mature adult, senior, geriatric) or a six-stage model (kitten, junior, prime, mature, senior, geriatric) is a matter of personal preference. As a cat veterinarian who feels that all cats die too young, the fact that so many life stage charts recognize the existence of a geriatric or super senior stage tells us that cats are living longer than ever before, and that’s something we can all agree is wonderful news. 🐾

Cat to human age chart

CAT AGE	HUMAN AGE
0-1 month	0 -1 year
2 -3 months	2 -4 years
4 months	6 -8 years
6 months	10 years
7 months	12 years
12 months	15 years
18 months	21 years
2 years	24 years
3 years	28 years
4 years	32 years
5 years	36 years
6 years	40 years
7 years	44 years
8 years	48 years
9 years	52 years
10 years	56 years
11 years	60 years
12 years	64 years
13 years	68 years
14 years	72 years
15 years	76 years
16 years	80 years
17 years	84 years
18 years	88 years
19 years	92 years
20 years	96 years
21 years	100 years
22 years	104 years
23 years	108 years
24 years	112 years
25 years	116 years

You can view the entire 22-page AAHA/AAFP Feline Life Stage Guidelines released in 2021 at: aaha.org/aaha-guidelines/life-stage-feline-2021/feline-life-stage-home/.



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