

ASK OUR VETERINARIANS



Dear Dr. Schmidt, What's in catnip that makes my cat Butterscotch get so "high"? Sam

Dear Sam, The active ingredient in catnip is called nepetalactone. It is a volatile oil that is found in the leaves and stems of the catnip plant and is a member of the mint family of herbs. Like marijuana in people, that is what causes their hallucinogenic behavior. They say cats like to eat the catnip because by crushing it, it will help release even more of the nepetalactone and give them an even bigger "high". Interestingly enough, it is a genetic trait that not all cats have. So if you have multiple cats at home and are wondering why some "trip out" and others don't, that's why. And just as interesting, kittens under 3 months of age rarely ever react to the effects of catnip. Another fun fact is that many other species of wild cats also enjoy the effects of catnip. And in case you were worried if it may be harmful to your cat, you can put your mind at ease. Cats just seem to know when they have had enough and when to stop. And since they don't have to drive a car or operate heavy machinery, they're good to go. The high usually lasts between 5-10 minutes, so Sam, crush up some catnip for Butterscotch and enjoy watching him "trip out" on the floor.

Submitted by Dr. Douglas Schmidt



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