



What is Catnip?

Catnip, or *Nepeta cataria*, is an herb that has is extremely attractive for most cats. The chemical component, nepetalactone, effects approximately 50%- 66% of all cats. Catnip is less effective for very young kittens (under 8 weeks) and for older cats.

What does catnip do?

Catnip is believed to work by imitating natural cat pheromones. Cats can respond to catnip based on scent and by contact. Since cats respond to the oils in the nip, it is more effective dried, chopped and broken, whereas cats will often simply ignore catnip while it's growing.

Catnip affects cats differently. Most cats will react as if they had experienced a mild hallucinogenic. Cats will rub against the catnip, play, and otherwise act crazy and comically. Most of these cats will react with a spurt of energy and playfulness. For some cats, however, catnip is not an upper, but a downer. Not a depression downer, but more of a calming downer. The cats will become mellow and calm. For these cats, catnip can be great to relieve stress when something changes in their environment, for instance you leave for work or a friend arrives for a visit.

The effect of catnip is limited to just 5-10 minutes after exposure. After that time, cats will return to normal and will typically lose interest in the catnip. WHAT??? Really. Then why bother? Well, because while catnip only works for 5-10 minutes, after 1-2 hours, your cat is recharged and will once again respond to catnip. Woo hoo. Use it over and over again.

Is it safe?

Absolutely! Catnip is an all natural herb that leaves no known long term effects on you or your cat.

What should I look for in buying catnip?

You should buy your catnip similar to how you buy natural herbs. Ideally, you want to look for the leaves of US grown, organically grown catnip.

First, you want to buy catnip that is primarily leaf. The oils are most concentrated in the leaf and so you are going to get the most bang-for-your-buck.

Since your cat may choose to ingest the catnip, you want your catnip to be either grown in the United States or grown in a country known for quality regulation of produce.

Finally, whenever possible, buy organic catnip. Again, your cat will be sniffing, rolling in, and potentially eating the catnip. Most catnip is farmed, dried, and chopped, and may or may not be washed from the field prior to this process. Your cat, who weighs between 8-22 lbs, the size of a small baby, is going to be far more susceptible to smaller amounts of trace chemicals and pesticides. Catnip does not have long-lasting negative effects; pesticides do.