



Pistachio 348348: What to Expect

Pistachio is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Pistachio is a sweet and sensitive girl who is ready to find her forever home. She may be shy at first, but once she feels safe, she loves staying close to her people, soaking up affection, and playing with toys. Pistachio may never be outgoing with everyone she meets, but with patience and time to build trust, she will form a strong, loving bond with her people.

Pistachio came to OHS from the home of an overwhelmed cat caregiver and we do not have much history on her. When she first arrived, she displayed fearful behavior and would vocalize, cower, and hide in the back of her kennel with tense body language. Because of the high stress she was experiencing, the decision was made to place her in our Behavior Modification Program. The environment in the BMOD program is better suited at helping cats feel comfortable in a shelter environment. With the larger kennel space, access to windows, increased enrichment, and dedicated one-on-one time with our team, we were able to help her decompress and learn more about her personality.

Once Pistachio entered the BMOD program, she quickly began showing confidence and affection with staff, along with a strong ability to socialize with the other cats in the program. We saw immediately that being in a quiet, calm environment and having choice and control made her feel safe. At first, she was nervous around new people, hiding on her cat tower with wide eyes, but with gentle reassurance and verbal encouragement, she realized we were not a threat, and her body language softened and relaxed. On her very first day in the BMOD program, she began leaning into pets, climbing into our laps, and soliciting affection from us. Pistachio is the definition of a true lap cat— she loves being close to her people, curled up on a shoulder or in a lap, happily soaking up endless pets and attention. She's a petite little lady with an incredibly sweet and gentle personality. Pistachio also loves being around other cats. She has made many feline friends here in BMOD and is often seen playing and snuggling with the other kitties in the program. After only a few short hours after arriving in BMOD, we made the decision to move her into our Sunroom, a communal cat space where she could socialize with other kitties and feel more at ease.

While she has grown confident in this environment and adapted quickly, she still has moments when she startles easily and may run and hide, but with gentle verbal reassurance she recovers quickly. Pistachio will do best in a calm home, with a family that is patient with her as she acclimates. She will also need a kitty friend in her new home. She has shown tremendous progress here in a short amount of time and we know that in the right home she will flourish even more. If you are looking for an incredibly sweet and affectionate little companion who will happily stick by your side, Pistachio is the perfect girl for you!

Her new family should expect that she will hide for a few weeks, possibly longer. You'll need to introduce her to new things slowly. Pistachio typically flees, hisses and swats when overwhelmed or scared. It's important to provide her with a small room with appropriate hiding spots for her to relax in, such as her own hidey bed. Hiding spots that are confined to a tight spot and out of reach from you will make it difficult to build a bond with her. The room you set her up in will be the catalyst for how quickly she acclimates. Start thinking now which room in your home would be best for Pistachio to settle into. If it's a bedroom, can she get under the bed or dresser making it difficult to spend time with her? If it's a laundry room or bathroom will the constant in and out of people and noises associated with these rooms be too much for her? By having a room without a lot of foot traffic and with appropriate hiding spots, it will allow you to work on building a relationship. While in her hiding spot, use calm voices and offer tasty treats to show you are not a threat. Place a small

amount of wet food or a treat on a spoon and offer it to Pistachio while in her hidey spot. Over time, by continuing to do this, Pistachio will become more comfortable and recognize that yummy food = people, therefore creating a positive association between the two.

Here's how to help Pistachio during your first months together:

This step is crucial in helping Pistachio acclimate to her new home. Confine Pistachio to one cat-proof room in your house. Provide Pistachio with a litter box, food, water, and a bed. Ensure she cannot get to *inappropriate* hiding spots (under the bed, in a closet, on top of a cabinet, etc.). Instead, provide her with a safe, comfortable hiding place like her cat carrier, a hidey-bed, or a large dog crate covered with a blanket.

Spend time with Pistachio in her room. Don't force her out of her hiding spot. Instead, encourage her to come out on her own using happy talk, offering a toy or treats. Once she is using the litter box, eating regularly, and coming out of hiding to interact with you, you can start introducing her to the rest of your home. Start by propping the door open and allowing her to come out on her own. Don't force it! If you come across something that you can tell Pistachio is worried about, allow her to hang back or hide if she chooses to do so.

Continue to provide a safe space. Even when Pistachio has started exploring the rest of the house, give her a safe space that she can retreat to. When she is in her safe space, insist that guests leave her alone and try to ignore her yourself. That way, when she comes out, you can reward her bravery with your attention.

No visitors (at first). Allow Pistachio time to adjust to your house, routine, and lifestyle before introducing her to new people. When you have visitors over, give Pistachio the freedom to make the decision to interact (or not!). Ask new people to ignore her – or if Pistachio seems curious or interested, have the new person toss her treats or offer a favorite toy. We want exciting, good things to come from new people.

Practice crate training. Leave her carrier out all the time, so it's just a part of her normal environment. Add a bed and keep the door securely propped open so she can go in and out on her own, making sure the door won't swing shut and frighten her. You can also clicker train her to run into the carrier on cue. Helping Pistachio get comfortable with her carrier will make it easier when it's time to visit the vet.

Visiting the vet: Unless it's an emergency, give Pistachio time to bond to you before taking her to the vet. Vet visits will more than likely be scary, but if she already trusts you, your presence may help her feel more comfortable.

Patience will come in handy for you. Pistachio is a cat that needs an understanding owner who has the time and desire to allow her to adapt in her own time. She may never be a social butterfly, and that's okay! Getting to know her and watching her come out of her shell will be extremely rewarding. Celebrate those small victories.

We're here to help!

We want Pistachio to be successful in her new home. We're available to answer questions via phone and email. Call the Behavior helpline at (503)416-2983 or email the BMOD Cat trainers at bmodcat@oregonhumane.org to connect with the Feline Behavior Modification department.

Please keep in touch so we can continue to help you and Pistachio now and in the future. Please reach out if you have any questions or concerns – or just to give an update. We love to see photos and hear how our friends are doing!

Thank you for adopting from the Oregon Humane Society. Congratulations on your new cat!

