

Cats, from our domestic familiars to big cats like lions and tigers are susceptible to an oil found in the leaves and stems of *Nepeta cataria*, or the catnip plant. Rolling around, flipping over, and being generally hyperactive are several common behaviors that are exhibited by felines that smell catnip. But what exactly is in it that makes cats go bonkers?

The active chemical compound ingredient that attracts and effects your cat is Nepetalactone. Since it is concentrated in the leaves and stems, it is common to find cats gnawing on the plant to release more of the oil. Nepetalactone triggers a sense of euphoria in the brain of the susceptible cat, which produces the “high” that is sometimes described as similar to either [marijuana](#) or LSD in humans. The response to catnip typically lasts for about 10 minutes before wearing off.

The peculiar thing about catnip is that the behaviors described above only occur when a cat smells the oil. When it is eaten, it acts as a sedative and many researchers believe it is because the oil mimics feline pheromones and is triggering those receptors. However, not all cats feel the effects of catnip. About 70 to 80 percent of cats seem to be affected and the behavioral reactions of catnip vary between individuals. It is thought that sensitivity, or lack thereof, to catnip is hereditary.

Catnip isn't just for cats either. *Nepeta cataria* is also known to help humans and has been used for its sedative properties for centuries. It has similar properties to chamomile and is also a very potent mosquito repellent. Luckily, cats cannot overdose on catnip, but that doesn't mean you don't want to know if what your cat is rolling around in is safe for them.

If detection of chemical compounds in your pet's nip, toys, and food is of interest to you and your next application, check out these resources:

[Analysis of FAMES in Salmon Oil and Pet Food](#)

[Zebron ZB-5MSplus GC Columns](#)

[Extraction of Melamine From Pet Food](#)

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Summary



Article Name

What Catnip is Made of and Why it Can Make Your Cat Seem "High"

Description

If you have ever owned a cat, you know how crazy they can go for catnip. Explore the chemical compounds that go into why cats go bonkers for catnip.