



FELINE LOWER URINARY TRACT DISEASE (FLUTD)

Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD) is a disease that results in inflammation of the bladder (cystitis) and/or the urethra (urethritis). The condition may result in partial or complete obstruction of the urinary tract. Urinary obstructions are life threatening and require immediate veterinary treatment.

What is the Cause?

The exact cause of FLUTD is unknown - there may be more than one single cause. It is a complex condition where a number of factors contribute to the development of the disease, including age, sex, obesity, diet, stress, urine pH and urine concentration.

What cats are most likely to be affected?

- Neutered male cats have incredibly narrow urethras (the tube that drains the bladder to the outside world through the penis). A small stone or a plug made of proteinaceous material and/or crystals can easily become lodged inside the urethra and completely block the outflow of urine.
- Overweight cats
- Cats confined indoors using litter trays
- Fed dry food only
- Stressed cats (New family members, other pets, litter not being changed)

Many blocked cats are young or middle-aged and have been neutered – but the problem can occur in older cats and uncastrated ones as well.

What is it that blocks the urethra and makes the cat unable to urinate?

The urethra most often gets blocked by 'plugs' of material including protein, cells and little crystals and/or by stones (uroliths) formed from minerals. These substances are usually present in the urine in small amounts but they can build up and then cause an obstruction. This may be more likely in cats that do not consume enough water (either in their diet or by drinking) or that do not urinate often enough.

Why is it a problem if the urethra becomes obstructed?

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The body needs to be able to pass urine in order to get rid of the bodies waste. Substances such as potassium, which are usually passed in the urine, will accumulate to such a high level in the cat's body that the animal will become systemically ill from the retained toxins, and will start to cause vomiting, heart arrhythmias, and lethargy. Complete obstruction can cause death of the cat in 3–6 days, and be very very painful.

Signs of feline bladder health problems

- Urinating outside of the litter box (Inappropriate urination)
- Straining when urinating
- Loss of bladder control
- Increased frequency of urination, usually passing small amounts of urine
- Pink, dark or bloody urine
- Crying out in pain/vocalizing during attempts to urinate
- Licking the genital area
- Reduced appetite
- Lack of energy or interest in normal activities

Unfortunately, cats that have experienced a urethral obstruction are at higher than average risk for developing the problem again. If a definitive cause for the blockage has been found, prevention strategies should be concentrated there. For example, a cat with struvite stones can be fed a diet that is known to dissolve this material and prevent the development of these stones in the future.

How is it treated?

If the bladder is blocked, a general anaesthetic is required to relieve the obstruction, flush out the urethra and place a tube (urinary catheter) into the bladder to allow a patent pathway for urine flow. Intravenous fluids are usually required to help dilute the urine and assist the kidneys in removing waste products. Usually the cat will be placed on medication to relax the muscle associated with urethral spasm. This is usually accompanied by a period of hospitalisation to ensure the bladder is working properly and the urethra remains patent after a blockage has been relieved.

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How do I care for my cat after treatment?

When your pet returns home, he should be confined indoors for at least 1-2 weeks. Occasionally a re-blockage occurs, so it is important to closely monitor your cat, and ensure that he is able to pass urine daily by using a litter tray.

Many therapies have been trialled to reduce the frequency of episodes but the only clinically proven therapy is to reduce the concentration of urine - as dilute urine is less likely to stimulate the sensitive bladders of affected cats. Reducing the concentration of urine in cats can be very difficult and usually involves the use of a wet/canned food only. We would strongly recommend your cat now changes to the veterinarian prescription diet such as *Hills Prescription C/D Diet* or *Royal Canin Urinary S/O*. Nutritionists & veterinarians developed these diets specifically formulated to support cats urinary and is a clinically tested nutrition to lower the recurrence of most common urinary signs by 89%. The diet works by:

- Dissolves struvite stones in as little as 7 days (Average 28 days)
- Reduces the risk of struvite & calcium oxalate stones

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