

# Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD)



## Basics

Feline lower urinary tract disease (FLUTD) is a disease of the bladder and urethra in cats. FLUTD can be caused by many different disease processes, all of which produce very similar signs and symptoms.

## Signs and Symptoms

*Difficult or painful urination ~ Increased frequency of urination ~ Blood in the urine ~ Urinating in abnormal places ~ Overgrooming ~ Behavioural changes ~ **Straining to urinate***

There are all clinical signs that can be associated with FLUTD. Your cat may show all or only a few of these signs. Straining to urinate can be a sign of a serious progression of the disease where the urinary bladder becomes completely blocked. This is a life-threatening emergency and ANY cat who is straining to urinate without producing any urine should be taken IMMEDIATELY to your veterinarian.

## Underlying Causes

A range of underlying causes can result in similar clinical signs in cats. *Urolithiasis (bladder stones, 10-15% of cases) ~ Bacterial infection (5-15% of cases) ~ Urethral plugs (debris accumulation causing small clots inside the bladder) ~ Neoplasia (uncommon but serious) ~ **Idiopathic cystitis or FIC (no underlying cause can be found, 60-70% of cases)***

**FIC is the most common cause and can be the most frustrating and difficult to manage.**

**IF YOUR CAT IS STRAINING TO URINATE AND NOT PRODUCING URINE, THIS CAN BE A LIFE THREATENING EMERGENCY**



## Investigation of Cases

Each case is assessed individually and our vets will develop an investigation plan tailored to your cat. There are some general guidelines for tests that may be suggested.

**Urinalysis** - collecting a urine sample to analyse is an important step. Your vet may obtain a urine sample by placing a very fine needle directly into the bladder. This is a good way of obtaining a urine sample because it should not be contaminated with bacteria from elsewhere. This is an easy procedure and most cats do not even notice when it is done.

**Ultrasound** - An ultrasound examination of the bladder can also be performed which may also help identify bladder stones, thickening of the bladder etc.

**Urine Culture** - Urine is sent to the laboratory to identify exactly which bacteria is present and which antibiotic will be most effective

**Blood tests** - Blood may be taken and sent to the lab to ensure no other organs are involved in your cats illness, especially the kidneys.

## Treatment

- **Increasing water intake**, and encouraging more frequent urination are good objectives in all cases of FLUTD. This may be helped by feeding wet (tinned or sachet) foods rather than dry foods, encouraging drinking, correcting obesity, encouraging exercise, and encouraging urination by considering how best to use litter boxes (if the cat is an indoor cat).
- **Antibiotics** in cases where bacterial infection is present
- **Surgery** if there are large bladder stones present which are unlikely to break down or which are unlikely to respond to dissolving medications.
- **Wet urinary diets** are recommended to most cats with urinary signs, they help to prevent signs from recurring and to dissolve small crystals in the bladder.
- **Acidifying tablets** are used to correct the pH of urine if it is too alkaline. Alkaline urine can predispose to infections.
- **Anti-inflammatories** help to reduce the inflammation in the bladder wall, discomfort and bleeding inside the bladder.
- **De-stressing techniques** play a big part in management of cats with urinary issues. See next chapter
- **Other treatments may be recommended based on your individual cat**

## De-stressing Techniques

Stress is a major factor that contributes to your cats urinary problems. Reducing stress in your cats environment can be a challenging but effective method of reducing the incidence of urinary disease. Cats hide stress extremely well, so even if your cat seems relaxed at home, stress can still be playing a big part in your cats FLUTD. Understanding the signs of stress in cats can help you to identify how your cat is feeling. Speak to one of our vets or nurses about learning the signs of stress in your cat.

Providing plenty of litter trays is important to allow and encourage regular and normal urination. Litter trays should be regularly cleaned and kept in quiet, low traffic areas. Cats who hold their bladders increase the risk of developing FLUTD signs.

The use of synthetic calming pheromones such as Feliway can also help keep stress levels low. The pheromone creates a 'safe home' feeling for your cat and can also help with inter-cat aggression within your home.

Some cats may even require anti-anxiety medication to help their FLUTD signs. In cases where there are stressors outside of our control (other cats in the neighbourhood, inter-cat aggression, anxiety) medications may be the only way to reduce stress levels enough to help control urinary signs.

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