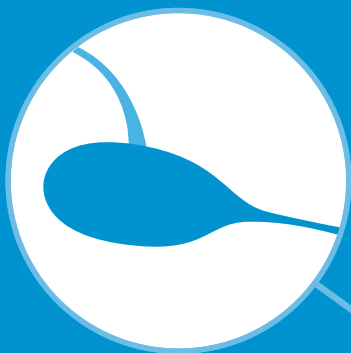


Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD)



CATS PROTECTION
VETERINARY GUIDES



FLUTD describes a collection of common conditions that affect the bladder and/or urethra (the narrow tube that carries urine from the bladder to the outside of the body). It includes the condition more commonly known as cystitis (inflammation of the bladder) and does not usually involve the kidneys. The signs shown by cats with FLUTD are often similar regardless of the cause.

Which cats are most susceptible to FLUTD?

FLUTD can be seen in cats of any age, although it is more common in middle-aged and overweight cats, particularly if they take little exercise, use an indoor litter tray, have limited access to the outside world and eat a dry diet. FLUTD occurs equally in male and female cats. However, neutered cats of both sexes are more susceptible and males have a greater risk of complete urinary tract blockage.

What causes FLUTD?

There are many causes of FLUTD including:

- urinary stones or crystals that form in the urine and irritate the lining of the bladder
- urethral plugs that form in the male cat's urethra, causing a physical obstruction
- spasm of the muscle in the wall of the urethra
- abnormalities in the structure of the urinary tract

- stress and behavioural problems
- cancer of the bladder or urethra
- disease affecting the nerves controlling the bladder
- bacterial or viral infections

However, in 60–70 per cent of cases it is not possible to find an underlying cause – this is termed idiopathic FLUTD.

What are the signs of FLUTD?

Cats with FLUTD usually show one or more of the following signs:

- difficulty, pain or crying when passing urine
- passing urine more frequently
- passing only small amounts of urine
- passing urine in inappropriate places
- straining before, during or after urination
- passing bloody urine
- behavioural changes and/or aggression
- inability to pass urine

How is FLUTD diagnosed?

Reaching a specific diagnosis of FLUTD can be challenging but all known causes need to be ruled out before a final diagnosis of idiopathic disease is reached. This can be frustrating for the cat owner but it is important to ensure that the most appropriate treatment is selected.

Your vet will take a thorough history to establish which signs your cat is displaying and when he is displaying them. A full physical examination will then be carried out during which your vet will feel the bladder and assess other organs. A urine sample will be collected and examined to determine its concentration, acidity and the presence of any crystals, protein, blood cells and bacteria.

Treatment is often started based on these results but if the signs recur, or do not improve, further investigations will be required. These may include X-rays or ultrasound examinations to assess the bladder, urethra and kidneys and to locate the exact site of the problem and the cause. In some cases it may be necessary for a sample of the bladder to be taken for examination at a laboratory.

How is FLUTD treated?

Treatment of FLUTD should be directed towards the underlying cause if one has been diagnosed, eg:

A **bacterial infection** will be treated with antibiotics – further urine samples may be required to show the infection is no longer present before stopping the antibiotics.

The presence of **urinary crystals or stones** may require a change in your cat's food to a prescribed diet specifically designed to dissolve them. Surgery may be needed to remove certain stones which do not dissolve.

A **urethral obstruction** will be dealt with as a medical emergency because it can be life threatening. Complete blockage of the urethra can lead to urine backing up to the kidneys and affecting their function. Your cat will need to be unblocked immediately, usually under a general anaesthetic. He will probably remain hospitalised for a few days after the blockage has been cleared.

If no specific cause can be identified, it is important to treat the signs and address long-term management. The following may help:

Reducing stress as this may be a 'flare factor'. Stressors include changes in diet, environment, weather, overcrowding or bullying, owner stress, the addition of new animals or people to the house, including babies and workmen. Stress associated with urination is particularly significant, eg unsuitable position/content of litter tray or competition for the litter tray. A pheromone diffuser from your vet may help.

Increasing water consumption to dilute the urine. This may be achieved by:

- changing your cat's diet to tinned food or moistening dry food
- supplying free access to water and encouraging your cat to drink eg using water fountains; leaving a tap dripping; using ceramic bowls instead of plastic or metal as these may taint the water; supplying multiple bowls/glasses of water; using distilled or bottled water; or flavoured broths (check with your vet to ensure the flavouring is safe for short or long-term use)

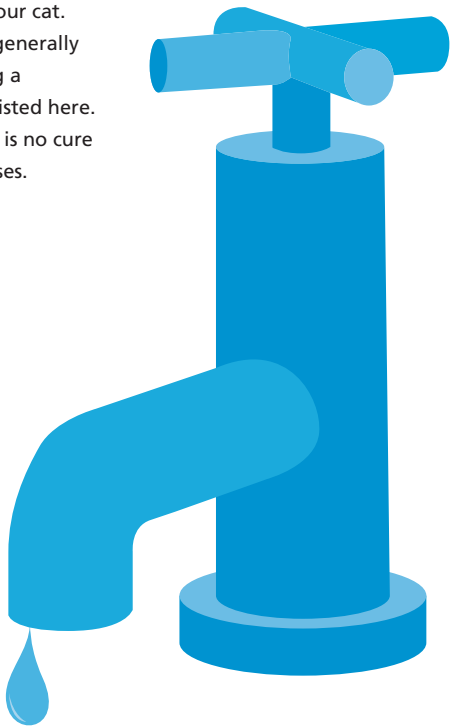
Controlled weight loss and increasing exercise – for long-term control.

Medical therapy issued by the vet, such as:

- a supplement to repair the protective inner lining of the bladder
- anti-inflammatory drugs may help to relieve pain in some cases
- relief of urethral spasm with drugs that relax the muscles
- anti-depressant drugs may be beneficial in some severe or chronic cases

What does the future hold?

The prognosis of FLUTD is variable and depends on the underlying cause. Most cats with FLUTD lead a relatively normal life with appropriate lifestyle changes and occasional long-term treatment. It is important to note that all current treatments for idiopathic FLUTD are merely relieving the symptoms and it may be a matter of trial and error to find the best treatment for your cat. The best results are generally gained by instigating a number of changes listed here. Unfortunately, there is no cure in the majority of cases.



This leaflet is one of a range provided by Cats Protection on issues surrounding cat care.

Cats Protection is the UK's leading feline welfare charity and helps more than 193,000 cats and kittens each year. We rely entirely on public generosity to finance this vital welfare work.

For more information on **adopting a cat**, **volunteering for us** or **making a donation**, visit **www.cats.org.uk**



Cats Protection, National Cat Centre,
Chelwood Gate, Nr Haywards Heath RH17 7TT

Helpline: 03000 12 12 12 Email: cp@cats.org.uk
Web: www.cats.org.uk VET02-2009 **CODE: 4074**

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