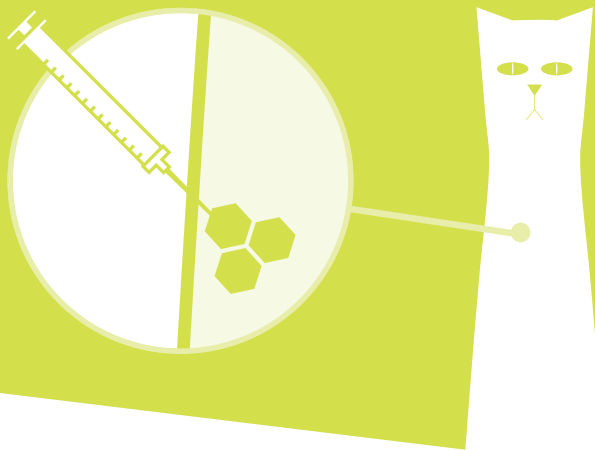


Diabetes Mellitus



CATS PROTECTION
VETERINARY GUIDES



Diabetes mellitus affects the control of blood sugar levels and usually occurs in middle-aged and older cats, particularly those that are overweight. There may be some genetic predisposition to the condition.

Normal sugar control

When a healthy cat eats, the food is digested and absorbed into the bloodstream. Glucose, a form of sugar, is one of the essential products that results from this digestion and provides the body with energy. As the blood glucose level rises after a meal, the pancreas releases a hormone called insulin into the blood. This allows glucose to leave the bloodstream and enter the body cells where it is needed as a source of energy. As the levels of glucose in the bloodstream drop back down to normal, the body stops producing insulin until the next meal.

Abnormal sugar control

Being diabetic means that the body either does not produce enough insulin or does not respond to it properly. Therefore, after the glucose is absorbed as normal into the bloodstream, it is unable to enter the body cells, leaving the body with abnormally high levels of circulating glucose.

The body is forced to use other substances such as fat or muscle protein to provide energy as the glucose cannot be used. Untreated, this process will eventually create toxic by-products that can make the cat extremely ill.

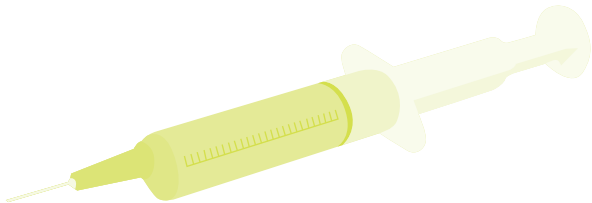
What are the signs of diabetes mellitus?

The clinical signs of diabetes can be similar to a number of other diseases and include:

- increased thirst and/or appetite
- passing more urine
- weight loss
- lethargy/weakness
- vomiting
- being more prone to other infections eg skin or urinary tract infections

How is diabetes diagnosed in cats?

To diagnose diabetes, your vet will want to take blood and urine samples from your cat to assess his glucose levels. Your cat will not be allowed any food for several hours before the blood test is taken. Your vet may also want to monitor how much your cat drinks over a period of time.



How is diabetes treated?

Diabetes is often treated more successfully if detected and treated in the early stages. Treatment may include the following:

Insulin injections

If your cat is diagnosed with diabetes, your vet is most likely to prescribe insulin. This must be given by injection. Most diabetic cats require one or two injections a day. Usually, diabetic cats require insulin for the rest of their lives but some cats, if treated early, will stabilise, becoming non-diabetic again for weeks, months or even years.

It often takes time to find the correct dose of insulin for your cat. It may be necessary for your cat to stay at the vets to allow them to monitor his glucose levels at regular intervals while starting and stabilising treatment.

You may feel anxious about injecting your cat, many owners do. Staff at your veterinary practice will demonstrate injection techniques for you, as well as running through other aspects of looking after a diabetic cat and offering support. Most owners find caring for a diabetic cat incredibly rewarding and injecting a cat soon becomes part of an easy daily routine.

In addition to injections, some veterinary practices will ask you to test urine samples at home as an extra method of monitoring your cat's progress.

Oral medication

In most cases, insulin treatment is necessary. However, a small percentage of cats respond to a combination of oral drugs, which lower the blood glucose, and a weight-reducing diet.

Diet

It is important that a diabetic cat receives a consistent quantity of the same diet every day.

Your vet may prescribe a specific veterinary diet to help control your cat's diabetes and in some cases – particularly with obese cats – carefully controlled weight loss may resolve the disease.

Routine

Routine and consistency are very important for a diabetic cat. Daily injections and feeding regimes should be carried out at the same time every day and you should try to ensure that your cat has the same amount of exercise every day.

As the secret to successful treatment is consistency, your vet may recommend keeping a diabetic diary. In it you can record food quantity, time of feeding and insulin dose given each day. You can also use it to keep an eye on your cat's weight, water intake, behaviour changes and urine sample results, if tested. This allows both you and your vet to monitor how your cat is coping and to notice any problems as soon as they arise. Any weight loss, reduction in appetite or general illness should be reported to your vet.

After diagnosis, there will be a period of time when your vet stabilises your cat. Once stabilised, your cat will need check-ups with your vet so they can monitor the condition. The bulk of treatment and monitoring will take place at home. In general, if excessive drinking, eating and urination have improved, it is a strong indication that the diabetes is under control.

What if I go on holiday?

Many catteries and pet sitters are happy to look after diabetic cats while you are away. To find one in your area, try:

- asking your vet if they can recommend one
- contacting someone in your area from the Diabetic Cat Register (see end of leaflet)
- checking the Feline Advisory Bureau's (FAB) list of approved catteries, many of which cater for diabetic cats

What does the future hold?

Providing the necessary treatment is received, there is no reason why a diabetic cat should not enjoy a relatively normal life for years.

There are many helpful leaflets and videos/DVDs available to help you understand what is involved with diabetic pets. Ask your vet for advice and guidance on further literature and to answer any questions you might have.

The Diabetic Cat Register

Cats Protection has compiled a register of volunteers who have had experience with diabetic cats and who are willing to offer their non-veterinary advice and support to owners. For a hardcopy of the register, please send a SAE (stamps to the value of 50p) to:

Helpline, Cats Protection, National Cat Centre, Chelwood Gate,
Haywards Heath, Sussex, RH17 7TT. Alternatively, contact our
Helpline on: 03000 12 12 12 or email helpline@cats.org.uk



diabeticREGISTER

your directory of contacts with experience of coping with a diabetic cat

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 VET14-2009 **CODE: 4086**

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