

# Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD)

## What is it?

Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease is a broad term for a number of conditions that can affect the urinary bladder and urethra. These conditions include bladder stones, bacterial infections, tumours, urethral blockage and feline idiopathic cystitis.

A number of cats may (frustratingly) develop clinical signs of bladder disease, without an obvious condition causing it, when this happens this condition is termed Feline Idiopathic Cystitis (FIC).

## What are the signs?

If your cat has FLUTD, the signs that you would see are ones that you would expect from having a sore bladder. **These signs include:**

- Frequent urination
- Pain/vocalising (sometimes) particularly when passing urine
- Urination in inappropriate places
- Blood tinged urine
- Over-grooming around the perineum
- Behavioural changes such as aggression/irritation

If your cat is straining and is not passing any urine, this can be a sign of a urethral blockage and is classed as an emergency.



## Diagnosis and treatment

Initially, your veterinary team will perform a full examination of your cat, particularly focusing on their hydration status, their pain level and how big their bladder is.

Often further tests are required, which might include a urine sample. A urine sample analysis can detect if there are any urinary crystals present, bacterial cells, blood cells and protein.

A blood test is also sometimes required to assess kidney function, and markers of infection and inflammation.

The majority of our patients with FLUTD need anti-inflammatory medication and recovery at home. However, the more serious cases, namely cats with a urethral blockage and who are unable to urinate, require an emergency anaesthetic to enable us to remove the urethral plug and pass a urinary catheter into the bladder to help with bladder emptying. We would also do a bladder flush to remove any further plugs, crystals or sediment.

## What causes FLUTD?

Any cat of any age can be affected by FLUTD, however it is more common in cats that are:

- Middle aged
- Obese
- Sedentary lifestyles ( e.g. indoor cats)
- Neutered
- Eat a dry kibble diet

Stress is an important factor for triggering episodes of FLUTD. Research has shown a link between stress and bladder inflammation. Therefore, any methods of reducing stress in cats can help to prevent cystitis signs.

It is also important to know that cats border on being dehydrated by choice. This causes concentrated urine and can worsen the urinary disease. As a result, we try and encourage water intake in our cats with FLUTD, this helps to dilute the urine and increase urination, to try and flush the bladder through.

## How can we help our patients to recover at home?

Depending on the cause of your cat's urinary tract issue, your vet may recommend a urinary diet.

There are numerous adaptations we can make at home to help with recovery and reduce the number of flare ups. These adaptations are just as important as the medications, and most of them revolve around reducing stress.

### Here are some ways you can prevent stress:

Consider using a pheromone diffuser. This releases a happy pheromone that cats give off. Plug-ins are available for long-term use, or sprays for travel. Some owners may not notice a huge effect on their cats, but for many, it makes a big difference. These are best placed away from food and water station, and in a quiet place in the house.



Within multi-cat households, have a litter tray per cat, plus one extra. Using different litter substrates e.g. wood chip, clay. Sharing litter trays can deter their use.

Feeding your pets separately can prevent competition for food. Using microchip feeders can be beneficial for graze feeders.

Encouraging exercise and play, particularly for indoor cats to help prevent obesity and sedentary lifestyles.

We know we can prevent cystitis by increasing a cat's water intake. To increase their consumption of water, have lots of bowls around the house of different shapes and sizes. Cats that like running water might enjoy a water fountain. If you feed your cats wet food, you can add extra water to this.

Having plenty of 'hidey-holes' gives them a place to shield from other pets and children. Having strict rules within the family of not playing with them if they've gone to hide is important. Cats like height and so cat trees or tall scratching posts are beneficial and ideal places to incorporate a 'hidey-hole'.



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**If you are worried about your cat's health, or want to discuss treatment options, give us a call to make an appointment.**