







Cystitis in Cats.

Cystitis is a condition where there is inflammation in the bladder resulting in pain and discomfort passing urine. Cystitis can be a frustrating condition to manage as your cat can be prone to repeat episodes throughout their life.

There are a range of simple changes you can make at home to your pet's lifestyle and combinations of different medications to manage the signs of cystitis and reduce the risk of further attacks.

What signs suggest my cat has Cystitis?

Any of the following signs can be seen in cats with cystitis:

-  Frequent trips to the litter tray
-  Taking a long time to pass small amounts of urine or not passing urine at all
-  Urinating in unusual places
-  Passing blood in or with their urine
-  Pain when urinating
-  Licking at their genitals a lot

What causes Cystitis?

Stress is the most common reason cats develop cystitis. Sometimes there is an obvious reason why your cat may be stressed, but it can often be difficult to identify the triggers.

Why stress causes cystitis is not fully understood, but it is believed that it causes a protective layer of cells, which line the bladder and protect it from chemicals in urine, to become damaged. The loss of this layer exposes the bladder tissue to urine and it becomes inflamed.

Less common causes of cystitis include bladder stones or crystals, bacterial infections or, rarely, tumours.

Investigating the cause.








If it is the first time your cat has had cystitis we will often treat the symptoms rather than starting investigations. However, if the problem is recurrent we would advise further tests. This usually involves collecting a urine sample to look for signs of a urinary tract infection or microscopic crystals in the urine. We often advise an ultrasound scan (or sometimes an x-ray) of the bladder and kidneys to check for bladder stones or tumours. There is no specific test for stress-triggered cystitis; we assume this is the cause of cystitis if all the other tests are all normal.



How do I prevent repeat episodes?

There are numerous changes you can make at home to try to prevent your cat having further attacks of cystitis.

Currently we believe the most important intervention is to try and make your cat urinate more often and to produce more dilute urine. There are several ways you can try to achieve this:






-  Feed a wet (i.e. tinned or sachet) cat food rather than biscuits. Wet food has a much higher water content than dry, so it will ensure that your cat is taking more water on board and should make their urine more dilute.
-  Adding additional water to your cat's wet food can further encourage extra water intake. Make sure your cat has plenty of water available to drink. Provide several different places for your cat to drink. Many cats prefer shallow, wider bowls to drink from. They often prefer ceramic bowls to plastic or metal ones.
-  It is advisable to have their water bowls away from their food bowl. They should also be away from noisy areas of the house and their litter tray. Flavoured water with e.g. tuna or even water fountains can encourage some cats to drink more.
-  Provide enough litter trays to encourage frequent urination. There should be at least one litter tray for every cat in the household.
-  Have the litter tray in a suitable location. It needs to be in an area where your cat will feel safe when using it i.e., somewhere quiet and private.
-  Your cats litter tray should be clean and scooped out daily.
-  Consider using different types of cat litter as cats often have a preference as to which type of cat litter they use.

Stress Reduction

If you can identify any specific triggers for stress in your cat these should be avoided or minimised wherever possible.

Cats need plenty of mental stimulation so enriching their home environment is an important part of stress reduction. There are 5 key areas to address to ensure a healthy environment for your cat at home, as recommended by the international society for feline medicine, these are described in detail at

www.icatcare.org/vets/guidelines





-  Provide a safe place e.g. perches or boxes for your cat.
-  Provide multiple and separated key resources e.g. food, water, toileting areas, play areas, rest areas.
-  Provide opportunity for play and predatory behaviour.
-  Provide positive, consistent and predictable human-cat interaction.
-  Provide an environment that respects the importance of the cat's sense of smell.

Indoor cats are more susceptible to stress and sometimes providing some outdoor access is needed.

Feliway® contains a substance that is similar to chemicals cats produce naturally (pheromones) and release when they are happy (e.g. when rubbing their face on furniture). **Feliway®** can be very useful in some cats to reduce anxiety. It is used in the home as a plug-in diffuser (it is odourless to humans).

Referral for an extended behavioural consultation with our vet Becky, at the Shadwell surgery, is available and if you feel this would be beneficial to your cat then we can easily arrange this for you.

Treatment.

-  **Painkillers:** although many episodes of cystitis will resolve naturally within a week, it is a painful condition, so we usually prescribe painkillers (e.g. Metacam) to keep your cat comfortable while the inflammation settles down.
-  **GAG replacers:** these are supplements which may help the damaged inner layer of the bladder repair itself. In some cases we advise their use long term, although it is uncertain whether they definitely help in cases of cystitis.
-  **Antispasmodics:** these are sometimes prescribed to reduce spasm of the muscles around the urethra to reduce pain and make it easier for your cat to pass urine.
-  **Anti-depressants:** are occasionally prescribed in particularly severe cases.

Emergency "Blocked" Cats.

In male cats particularly, cystitis signs can progress to the point where they are no longer able to pass urine at all. This is an urgent emergency and requires immediate treatment, it can rapidly lead to kidney failure and death.

If you think your cat is trying to pass urine and is unable to or if they seem suddenly unwell (e.g. lethargic, vomiting, painful) then contact the Thornbury hospital immediately to arrange an appointment.

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