



Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD)

Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD) is a collection of conditions that affect the bladder and urethra of cats. The conditions can include Feline Idiopathic Cystitis (FIC), bladder stones, urinary blockage caused by an obstruction of the urethra, infections, or tumors. FIC is the most common cause.

Signs



Most of the conditions cause similar signs. Frequently seen are blood in the urine, straining to urinate (spending long periods in the litter box),

urinating small amounts more often, frequent licking of the genital area, and urinating outside the box.

Whenever your cat is showing these signs, visit your veterinarian soon. If your cat is male and straining to urinate, he may have an obstruction and **it could be life threatening**. See a vet immediately.

Cats will often stop using the litter box if it hurts when they urinate. It needs to be determined whether the reason is a medical problem or solely behavioral.

Diagnosis

We examine a urine sample to look for abnormalities that indicate a medical problem. A culture of the urine tells us if an infection is present and, if so, which antibiotic is the best one to use. X-rays and ultrasound will look for bladder stones, tumors, and if the bladder wall is thicker than normal.

Feline Idiopathic Cystitis

Cystitis means inflammation of the bladder. Idiopathic means we don't know what is causing it. We diagnose FIC when there is no infection, stones, or tumor causing your cat's signs.

Overweight and indoor cats are more likely to develop problems and most cats start between the ages of two and six. Recurrence is common. Many of these cats have other problems; heart, respiratory, skin, GI, or with the immune system.

Some of these cats have a defect in the lining of the bladder making them more prone to inflammation. Stress appears to be an underlying cause for these cats.

Bladder Stones & Obstruction

Crystals are microscopic mineral fragments in the urine. In large numbers, they may cause irritation to the bladder lining. They can also form together into stones. Sometimes they form a sludge-like material in the bladder.



This material can cause an obstruction as it tries to pass through the narrow urethra in male cats.

Infections

Bladder infections are not common in healthy cats. They are more likely to be present in older, especially female cats. Often there is another condition, such as diabetes, that is making the cat more prone to developing an infection.

Treatment

Treatment varies with the underlying cause. This condition may wax and wane and FIC may clear up without any treatment.

Pain medication is the primary treatment these cats need. Infections need antibiotics. Bladder stones may dissolve with special diets though usually surgery is necessary to remove them.

Stress reduction is required for these cats. See our article on [Enrichment for Cats](#) for things that will help. Medications can also help to reduce stress and anxiety in cats.



Special prescription foods can help to reduce crystals. Canned food provides more water so the urine is less concentrated and less irritating to the bladder. Some cats drink more from fountains rather than bowls.

Supplements such as fish oil, antioxidants, and glucosamine/chondroitin (arthritis products that improve the bladder lining) can help.

Summary

Fortunately, only a small percentage of cats will develop this problem. However, it's a huge problem for the cats, and their owners, that do. You can manage most situations successfully with proper treatment and stress reduction.