



Chlamydia in Cats

Chlamydia is a bacterium that can cause conjunctivitis in cats. Conjunctivitis is the inflammation and swelling of the white part of the eye. The bacteria are spread through close contact with other infected cats. It is most common in young cats or cats with a compromised immune system. It is rare in dogs and humans. People have their own version of Chlamydia.

Signs

Initially, one eye is affected but shortly after, it usually affects both eyes. The most common sign is eye discharge that starts out clear and occasionally changes colors (brown or green).



Other signs include swelling of the whites of the eyes, reddening of the whites of the eyes, and squinting. They may also show signs of an upper respiratory tract infection (a cold) such as sneezing, discharge from the nose, and possibly a fever. Often, the signs will come and go and can vary greatly between cats.

Diagnosis

A PCR test (similar to a DNA test) is the best way to diagnose the infection. Swabs from the eye are sent to an outside lab for testing. Doctors often treat for Chlamydia without an official diagnosis and then look for improvement of signs.

Treatment

Treatment is with antibiotics for a minimum of 4 weeks to clear up the infection completely. If you stop the medicine too soon, some of the bacteria will survive and start the infection all over again. Other cats in the household will need treatment at the same time.

Prevention

There is a vaccine available but we do not advise it. The infection is not life threatening, the vaccine doesn't prevent the disease but only reduces the signs, and the condition is treatable. It's better to avoid possible unwanted side effects from the vaccine.