



Hairballs

Hairballs consist of ingested hair that builds up in the stomach. The hair can be mixed with digestive juices and any food in the stomach at the time. Hairballs tend to be tubular in shape and look like a cigar butt or small sausage.



When cats groom, they swallow the hair. Normally, cat hair passes through the intestinal tract without any problem. If a cat is grooming excessively, there may be more hair swallowed and hairballs can develop.

However, more than one or two hairballs a year is not normal. More than that usually indicates there is an underlying problem going on within the stomach or intestinal tract. Inflammation or decreased motility of the intestines can cause hair to build up and hairballs to form. The most common underlying problems are Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD), food allergies, or lymphoma (cancer). The majority will have IBD or lymphoma and IBD can lead to lymphoma. This means it could be a serious problem for your cat.

Brushing your cat more often, giving a lubricant to move the hair through, and special diets are all options to reduce the amount of hairballs your cat has. Be aware, though, that you may be masking a bigger problem. The best option is to have your cat examined and tested to see if there is an underlying cause. It's always better to treat the problem early!

