

Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD) Basic Information

Inappropriate urination in cats can be caused by a number of conditions. Clinically in my practice we see urinary crystals, inflammatory conditions, infections, behavior and, occasionally, cancer or polyps. It is important to diagnose the cause of the inappropriate urination as treatment often differs significantly based on the primary cause. A thorough history, physical exam and urinalysis are required for a minimum database. Depending on the case, blood work and imaging (radiographs) may be recommended.

1. Urinary crystals (crystaluria):

Urinary crystals cause irritation to both the bladder and the urethra. Initially, discomfort leads to frequent urination and often to inappropriate urinations. The condition is both painful and potentially very serious. Providing the following can often prevent urinary crystals.

- Appropriate diets to reduce the formation of crystals
- Increased access to fresh water. Fountains or running water may help
- Increasing the amount of an appropriate canned food vs all dry

THE BLOCKED CAT - This is an emergency! It is often related to crystals in the urine plugging the urethra obstructing the flow of urine. **This is life threatening** as toxins and electrolytes cannot be excreted. Cats that are blocked often show the following signs:

- Straining repeatedly in the litter box (often mistaken for constipation)
- Crying or howling
- Licking at the genitals/below the base of the tail
- Hiding

The following link to an article on the Veterinary Partner website is an excellent overview of what might be encountered with a blocked cat.

<http://www.veterinarypartner.com/Content.plx?P=A&A=3587>

2. Urinary tract infections:

Urinary tract infections (UTI's) can occur in both female and male cats. Although less common than once believed, they do occur and require a urinalysis and sometimes a culture to diagnose. If found, antibiotics will be dispensed. It is important to note that several other conditions can manifest in the same manner as an infection.

3. Behavioral inappropriate urination:

Cats may act out with inappropriate behavior by urinating outside of their litter box. Once crystals and infections have been ruled out, some basic recommendations will be made to try and help with a potential behavior problem. The following recommendations may help with behavior issues in cats. These same recommendations can be tried to reduce the likelihood of behavioral problems before they occur.

Behavioral modification suggestions for cats:

- If possible, increase the number of litter boxes to one more than the number of cats. (i.e. 2 cats -3 boxes)
- Clean the boxes every day (super clean)
- Keep the boxes in easy access locations but out of high traffic or noisy areas (i.e. not near laundry machines or active hallways)
- Mood modifying products like Feliway or Zylkene

4. Inflammatory condition (Sterile Hemorrhagic Cystitis)

This is a condition in which we find no crystals, infection or cancer. However, the cat is diagnosed with significant red blood cells in the urine. This is typically a diagnosis of exclusion. In essence, the diagnosis is made by ruling out other common conditions with the exam, urinalysis, radiographs and frequent blood work. Once a diagnosis of SHC is made, then attempts are made to reduce the inflammation. This often involves medication and supplements to reduce overall stress in the cat. As well, diets that promote diuresis can be of benefit. Other anti-inflammatory medication may be prescribed as well.