

Idiopathic Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease



HUON VALLEY
**VETERINARY
HOSPITAL**

What is FLUTD?

FLUTD, or feline lower urinary tract disease, is a group of conditions causing pain, inflammation and irritation of the bladder and urethra of cats. There are several medical conditions that cause signs of FLUTD (see below). If we are unable to find a medical condition causing signs of FLUTD then it is called 'idiopathic' FLUTD (IFLUTD), meaning the cause is unknown.

What are the signs of FLUTD?

Pain and difficulty on urination, Increase in frequency of urination, blood in the urine, urination in 'odd' places/failing to use the litter tray, general agitation/aggression

What medical conditions cause signs of FLUTD?

Several medical conditions can cause signs of FLUTD including bladder stones, urinary bacterial infection, cancer, anatomical defects, urethral obstruction and behavioral problems.

Diagnosis of IFLUTD

To diagnose IFLUTD, we have to rule out the 'medical' causes of FLUTD. This involves blood tests (looking for other diseases), urinalysis (looking for bacteria, crystals & inflammatory cells), measuring urine concentration and the pH (or acidity) of the urine. Radiographs and ultrasound may be required to look for bladder stones, anatomical defects or cancer. You may be required to complete a behavioral questionnaire which will help both in the diagnosis of IFLUTD and may also provide some clues as how best to help reduce stress for your cat.

What causes IFLUTD?

No one knows exactly what causes IFLUTD but it seems to involve a combination of irritants in the urine, loss of the protective lining of the bladder and STRESS! Any cat can develop IFLUTD but it is more common in middle aged, over weight, litter box using, indoor cats on a dry food diet.

Medications

Sometimes, although changes are made, signs of IFLUTD may continue to recur. In these cases medication may be used to relieve pain associated with the bladder inflammation. Some patients respond to medication which relieves anxiety. All medications have side effects and we will discuss this with you if your cat requires further treatment.



What You Can Do

Reduce Stress

Many things cause stress to cats that we may not consider stressful. To reduce unnecessary stress try the following:

- Provide a litter tray for every cat in the house PLUS one (some cats don't like to share).
- In multi-cat households, place litter trays in at least two different locations as a bossy cat may prevent other cats from using the trays.
- Experiment with different litter textures as cats have definite preferences.
- Ensure the litter trays are cleaned regularly, as cats don't like dirty toilets!
- New people or cats in the house or neighborhood, as well as changing food type, can all be stressful and should be avoided if possible.
- Ensure your cat is not bored. Spend time grooming or playing with your cat, using food balls or hiding food to simulate hunting and providing cat grass to chew are all ways to 'enrich' your cats environment and are especially important if your cat is an indoor only cat.
- Try 'Feliway', a cat pheromone that helps cats stay calm. It comes as a spray or a diffuser (to plug into the wall) and has been shown to help some cases of IFLUTD.

2. Reduce the irritant level of the urine

Dilute urine, at an optimum pH, is less likely to irritate the bladder. This will also reduce the level of crystals in the urine. Many normal cats have crystals in their urine, however large numbers may be irritating and increase the chance of bladder stones forming. Diet is the easiest way to change the composition of the urine. Ideally a wet diet should be fed and/or water may be added to dry food. Providing several water bowls around the house, adding a small amount of tuna juice to water to make a 'cat cordial', or installing a cat water fountain are all great ways to get your cat to drink more.

There are several veterinary diets made by Hills and Royal Canin which are suitable for some but not all cats with IFLUTD. Your pet will be prescribed one if appropriate.

3. Restore the protective lining of the bladder

The protective lining of the bladder is made of glycosaminoglycans or GAGs. There is some evidence that supplementation of these GAGs by injection or orally may reduce the recurrence of IFLUTD. Your vet will prescribe one if appropriate.



Urethral obstruction

FLUTD can be an uncomfortable and distressing condition for you and your cat. Unfortunately cats with FLUTD are at an increased risk of developing urethral obstruction (UO), which can be FATAL. The inflammatory products produced in the urinary tract of cats with FLUTD may combine with other substances in the bladder (eg crystals) and form a 'plug' which blocks the urethra and prevents urination. This occurs more commonly in males than females (due to the width of the urethra).

Cats with UO may initially appear as though they have FLUTD with increased and often painful attempts to urinate. Only a very small amount of urine will be produced or none at all. If left untreated cats will become lethargic, inappetent and may vomit. If unable to urinate for 2-3 days they may develop kidney failure or a ruptured bladder. UO is a medical emergency and you need to seek veterinary treatment so we can relieve the obstruction.

The early signs of UO and FLUTD are very similar and cats with FLUTD may go on to develop UO... so if your cat shows signs of FLUTD and becomes unwell please contact us immediately.

**For after hours
emergency services
please call Animal
Emergency Service on
0427 025 073**

