



HOW TO PREVENT THE RECURRENCE OF FELINE LOWER URINARY TRACT DISEASE

Katy Patterson-Miller, DVM, Director of Dog & Cat Health & Nutrition

THE ISSUE

Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD) is the name for a group of disease processes that are similar in presentation (the way cats act) and in the ways their recurrence can be prevented. The causes of FLUTD vary, but in more than half of FLUTD cases no cause can be identified (idiopathic). Increasingly, veterinary research is coalescing around the idea that the frequency of urinary tract disease in modern cats can be reduced by bringing cats' diets more closely in line with the diets their ancestors used to eat: more moisture, more meat, higher quality meat and fewer carbs. This solution sheet is designed to help a cat owner reduce the likelihood that FLUTD will recur after his cat has been diagnosed and successfully treated for FLUTD by a veterinarian.

WHEN TO CONTACT YOUR VETERINARIAN

Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD) has the potential to progress into life-threatening blockages that may require emergency surgery. See your veterinarian immediately if: you think your cat may be suffering from FLUTD, your cat is not producing urine, he strains or cries when urinating, his urine volume becomes significantly less, there is blood in his urine or your cat otherwise appears to become ill. **This solution sheet can help owners prevent the recurrence of FLUTD after successful treatment, but diagnosis and initial treatment must be provided by a veterinarian.** Your vet may prescribe a prescription diet to dissolve urinary crystals or stones. There are no commercial diets designed to provide this treatment. If your cat has been prescribed a prescription diet, please confirm a switch to a non-prescription diet with your vet before making this change.

THE SOLUTION

We've provided a variety of approaches and starred (*) the ones we think will accomplish the most for most cats.

1 *Transition your cat to a moisture-rich, highly digestible, meat-rich diet

- **If your cat is eating only kibble**, begin by fully transitioning her to wet food. (See our *How to Transition Cats to Wet Foods*.) Then seek to transition her from wet food to raw food.
- **If your cat is eating a mix of kibble and wet or raw food**, gradually reduce the amount of kibble and increasing the amount of wet or raw food. Make the transition to a totally wet or raw diet slowly over the course of a month.
- **If your cat is eating only wet food**, seek to transition her to raw foods. (See our *How to Feed Your Cat Freeze-dried and Dehydrated Food* and our *How to Feed Your Cat Frozen Raw Food*.)
- **If your cat refuses anything but kibble**, try adding water to her dry food. Begin with a small amount and gradually increase the amount of water with each meal to 1 to 1½ cups of water per half cup of kibble (or as much as your cat will tolerate without reducing her food intake).

Minerals are necessary nutrients, but they're also the building blocks of stones or crystals. A relatively low mineral content (phosphorus levels of 1.2% dry matter or below) make good potential choices for cats who have recovered from FLUTD. A Muddy can use our formula browser to find for you the foods we currently carry with the phosphorus levels at or below 1.2% (3 g/1000kcal, dry matter). If your cat would appear to benefit from a moderate level of protein, we can also look for formulas below 40% protein (dry matter).

2 *Water, water, water

The most natural and effective way to increase your cat's total intake of moisture is to increase the moisture content of his food from around 10% (kibble) to around 70% (wet, raw frozen, rehydrated and cat's natural diet of small prey.) But it also makes sense to encourage cats to drink more water.

- ***Change water daily.** Cats are more likely to drink water that smells and tastes fresh.
- ***Multiple sources.** Provide several water choices in different places. No water near litter boxes.
- **Make it move.** Cats are attracted to running water, and some are more likely to drink water that moves. Cat fountains are less wasteful than leaving a tap running.
- **Make it taste good.** Some cats drink more when their water tastes better. Switching to bottled or filtered water may increase consumption and so may adding low sodium broth from chicken, tuna, clams or sardines. At least one water dish should be plain water.

3 *Make litter boxes more inviting

Preventing situations that discourage cats from peeing can help reduce the recurrence of FLUTD. Most cats prefer a clean litter box. To ensure your cat never hesitates, provide at least two litter boxes; put them in different places and clean them once or twice daily. Most cats like to pee where they feel quiet and safe. Experiment with location and with open and covered boxes to find the pee situation your cat prefers. To prevent a situation where your cat dislikes all of his litter box choices (and chooses to pee outside his box), always keep your cat's top choice available—then test alternative boxes and locations against his favorite.

4 Reduce stress

Idiopathic Cystitis (60% of FLUTD cases) is associated with high stress levels. Signs of stress include hiding, aggression, inappropriate urination and chronic vomiting, but cats may be under stress without showing these signs. If you think your cat may be experiencing stress, see our *Reducing Stress in Cats*.

5 Improve urinary tract health

Herbal supplements may help increase blood flow to the kidneys, reduce bladder inflammation and increase urination frequency and volume. Glucosamine can improve bladder wall health, a particularly useful tactic for cats that have been diagnosed with Idiopathic Cystitis and have been found to have blood in their bladders.

RESULTS

In the short term, increasing your cat's moisture intake should result in more urine in his litter box. Look for about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of urine per day for a 10 lb. cat. In the long term, these approaches should improve the health of your cat's urinary system and make it less likely that he'll again develop urinary issues that require veterinary care.

STILL HAVE QUESTIONS?

Mud Bay staffers are specially trained to help owners care for cats after they have been diagnosed and successfully treated for urinary tract problems. Muddies can also help you find the products that match the recommendations on this sheet, so if you need more help or information, please let us know.