

Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD)

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What is FLUTD?

FLUTD stands for Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease and is a term used to describe any group of disorders or diseases that affects the lower urinary tract (bladder or urethra) in cats. FLUTD is a condition often associated with the formation of crystals/stones in the urinary tract that can cause numerous and painful ailments for your cat. The two most common types of crystals are struvite (which are formed in urine with an alkaline pH) and calcium oxalate (which are formed in urine with an acidic pH).

Q. What are the causes of FLUTD?

The most common cause of FLUTD is feline idiopathic cystitis (FIC), which is present in up to two-thirds of cats with lower urinary tract symptoms and is associated with increased stress. Other common causes include urethral plugs and urinary bladder stones.

Q. What are some of the warning signs of FLUTD?

- Inappropriate urination – accidents outside the litter box
- Increased frequency of urination, usually passing small amounts of urine
- Pink or red discoloration of urine – due to presence of red blood cells
- Straining to urinate – staying in the litter box longer
- Licking the genital area
- Crying out/vocalizing during attempts to urinate because of pain

Q. Why is it important for cat owners to know about FLUTD?

Outside of routine care, FLUTD is the number one reason pet owners take their cat to the veterinarian (Why Fluffy went to the doctor. Vet Econ, 2005). Inappropriate urination is also the number one behavioral reason why cats are relinquished to shelters. If not properly treated, this condition can impact the family/pet bond and can result in serious, even fatal, consequences.

Q. What can I do if my cat is showing symptoms of FLUTD?

If your cat exhibits any of the warning signs of FLUTD, consult your veterinarian immediately and find out if the new Hill's® Prescription Diet® food for bladder health is right for your cat.

Q. What are some risk factors associated with FLUTD?

FLUTD is a multifactor disease. Though there is no single cause of lower urinary tract disease, veterinarians recognize there are components that may contribute to the prevalence of the disease. For more detailed information, contact your veterinarian or visit www.HillsPet.com.

- Patient Factors:
 - Age of one year or older
 - Overweight
 - Lack of exercise
 - History of chronic kidney disease or urinary tract procedures, such as urethral catheterization or perineal urethrostomy
 - Gender; although both males and females are at equal risk for FLUTD, males (especially neutered males) have a greater risk of serious urethral obstruction from crystals and stones
- Environmental Factors:
 - Restricted ability to leave the house
 - Living in conflict with other pets
 - Stress
- Nutritional Factors:
 - Insufficient water intake

Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD) Frequently Asked Questions(Cont'd)

Q. How is FLUTD treated?

Nutritional management can have a significant impact on managing cats with FLUTD. Additional ways to manage FLUTD through environmental enrichment and behavior modification techniques include the following:

- Increase water consumption – make sure the water is clean, fresh and available at all times
- Add low-sodium broth to food to increase fluid intake
- Feed several small meals during the day instead of 1 or 2 larger meals
- Decrease stress in the environment – provide scratching posts or kitty condos, as well as schedule time during the day to play with your cat
- Monitor the changes in the home and any conflicts with other pets in the house

Q. Can behavioral problems cause inappropriate urination?

Some cats may begin to urinate in very unusual places, such as bed pillows, sinks and bathtubs. These signs don't always denote a medical problem. Cats with inappropriate urination should be evaluated by a veterinarian, as FLUTD can cause cats to urinate outside of the litter box.

If no underlying medical cause for inappropriate urination can be found, then behavioral problems should be considered. Some cats may initially have FLUTD, which results in aversion to using the litter box. Even after correction of the underlying cause, inappropriate urination may persist because of the association of the litter box with the painful urination experience. In cases like these, evaluation by a veterinary behaviorist is appropriate.

Q. What is litter box management?

Litter box management is a critical part of treating cats with inappropriate urination. It is often helpful to have an adequate number of litter boxes (one more litter box than the number of cats) in the home, located away from noisy appliances.

Ideally, litter boxes should be large enough for a cat to easily turn around in. Often cats prefer uncovered litter boxes to covered ones. Research has shown that most cats prefer clumping, unscented litter.

Two other tips that would enrich your cat's environment include scooping the litter after each use and cleaning the litter box with warm water and mild detergent every two weeks.

Q. What are the chances of recurrence of FLUTD?

FLUTD is potentially a lifelong disease. Many owners see improvements in their cat's health and discontinue the use of therapeutic foods. Even with the best treatment, some cats may have reoccurring symptoms or periodic episodes of FLUTD. It is important to continue with the nutritional management of the disease and watch the pet closely for the recurrence of symptoms.