



Associated Veterinary Specialists, PC, LTD

12462G Natural Bridge Road

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Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD)

Feline lower urinary tract disease describes a variety of conditions that affect the bladder and urethra in cats. This disease is usually seen in middle-aged, overweight cats, that use a litterbox, have little or no outdoor access or eat dry food. Factors such as emotional or environmental stress, multi-cat house households and abrupt changes in daily routine may also increase the risk that a cat will develop FLUTD.

The major clinical signs that may be seen include the following:

- Straining to urinate
- Urinating small amounts
- Frequent and/or prolonged attempts to urinate
- Crying out while urinating
- Excessive licking of the genital area
- Urinating outside the litterbox
- Blood in the urine

Cats that have a urethral obstruction (a blockage in the urethra) will show these signs but will pass little or not urine and become increasingly distressed. A urethral obstruction is seen more often in males than female cats due to their longer, narrow urethra.

****A urethral obstruction is an emergency and requires immediate veterinary treatment! ****

In order to diagnose your cat with FLUTD, several diagnostics will probably be recommended by your veterinarian and may include the following:

- History and physical examination
- Urine evaluation
- Chemistry panel to evaluate the function of the kidneys and electrolytes
- X-rays of the abdomen

There are several different causes of FLUTD. The most common are described below:

1. Urinary stones- these stones form in the bladder from a collection of minerals in the bladder. Stones can sometimes be dissolved with diet. If the stones do not dissolve then they may need to be removed surgically.



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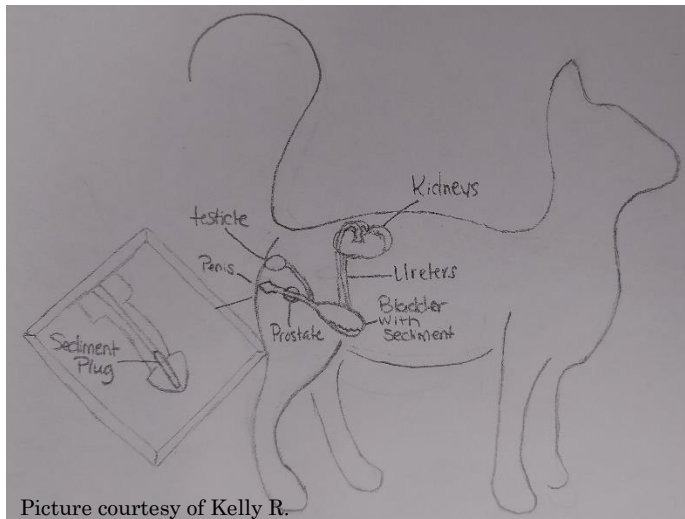
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2. Urethral obstruction- the most serious problem associated with urinary function is when a cat's urethra becomes partly or totally blocked. These cats strain to urinate and produce little or no urine. It can appear that the cat is constipated and straining to pass stool, but straining in the litterbox is more often a sign of urethral obstruction. Urethral obstruction is potentially life-threatening which can be caused by urethral stones or urethral plugs. Urethral plugs are composed of soft material containing minerals, cells and mucus-like protein.



Male cats (neutered or intact) are at greater risk for urethral obstruction than females because their urethra is longer and narrower. This is a true medical emergency, and any cat suspected of suffering from this condition must receive immediate veterinary attention. Once the urethra becomes completely blocked, the kidneys are no longer able to remove toxins from the blood or maintain a balance of fluids and electrolytes in the

body. Without treatment, death frequently occurs when these imbalances lead to heart failure — often in less than twenty-four to forty-eight hours.

Treatment of this condition involves dislodging the obstruction, usually accomplished by flushing a sterile solution through a narrow tube placed into the urethra. Once the obstruction is removed, further treatment depends upon the condition of the cat. Dehydration and electrolyte imbalances are treated with intravenous fluid therapy. For cats who continue to experience urethral obstruction despite medical treatment, there is a surgical procedure called a perineal urethrostomy (PU).

3. Idiopathic Cystitis- is the most common diagnosis in cats less than 10 years of age with lower urinary tract disease. The disease is not fully understood and may involve several body systems in addition to the urinary system.

Idiopathic cystitis is a diagnosis of exclusion, meaning that it is a diagnosis made after all diseases that might cause similar signs are ruled out. There is no specific diagnostic test for FIC. Stress and diet changes can increase the risk of FIC. As many as 40-50% of cats will have another episode of FIC within one year, but veterinarians cannot predict which cats will have relapses. The disease can be chronic and very frustrating for the cat, the owner, and the veterinarian. The current goals of treating cats with FIC are to decrease the severity and frequency of episodes. There are numerous medical treatments that result in variable degrees



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of success but often the veterinarian will start by addressing any behavioral issues. This may include feeding only canned food and reduction of stress.

What can I do at home to prevent reoccurrences of FLUTD?

FLUTD may never or occasionally reoccur depending on the underlying cause. To help reduce the reoccurrence, the following ideas may be pursued:

- Feed small, frequent meals
- Consult with your veterinarian about the best diet for your cat
- Provide clean, fresh water at all times
- Provide an adequate number of litterboxes (usually one more than the number of cats in the household) with their preferred type of litter.
- Keep litterboxes in quiet, safe areas of the house
- Keep litterboxes clean- scoop twice daily and change the litter weekly
- Minimize major changes in your cat's routine
- Reduce stress

Kimberly Loyd, DVM, DACVIM

Reference: American Veterinary Medical Association