

Blindness in Cats

Overview

- There are many different things that can cause a cat to go blind, some are treatable and some are not.
- Sight loss in cats can be gradual or sudden depending on the cause.
- Fortunately, many cats cope well with blindness, especially if they have lost vision gradually and adapted well.
- Contact your vet if you suspect your cat is losing their sight.

General overview



There are many different things that can cause blindness in cats; some cause it gradually (such as cataracts), and others very suddenly (such as retinal detachment and head trauma). Cats that lose their sight gradually often learn to adapt and lead a normal, happy life (by using their hearing, whiskers, and set routes around the house). Cats that go blind suddenly often struggle, and take a longer to adapt.

Caring for a blind cat

If you've been told your cat is losing their sight, or if you're thinking about adopting a blind cat, there are a some simple things you can do to help them adjust. For more information, read our full article [Caring for blind pets](#).

How to tell if a cat is blind

Sudden blindness is usually obvious, whereas gradual sight loss can be surprisingly tricky to spot (because most cats adapt to it well). Signs often include:

- Cloudy eyes
- Uneven or very wide pupils
- Disorientation and bumping into things, especially in low light
- Walking slowly/cautiously with their legs wider apart than usual (some cats will stay close to a wall to guide them)
- Reluctance to jump
- Hiding away/becoming nervous
- Reluctance to go out at night
- Changes in behaviour

Causes

There are many different things that can cause blindness in a cat, including:

- **Eye injuries** - common after catfights and penetrating injuries.
- **Cataracts** - common in older cats and [cats with diabetes](#).
- **Retinal detachment** - when the back of the eye (the retina) comes loose and detaches, common in cats with high blood pressure and [kidney disease](#).
- **Head trauma** - blindness can be caused by head injuries, common after road traffic accidents.
- **Glaucoma** - increased pressure inside the eye.
- **Uveitis** - inflammation inside the eye.
- **Optic nerve disease** - a problem with the nerve that connects the brain to the eye.
- **Brain disease** - such as a bleed, stroke, tumour or infection.
- **General disease** - diseases in another part of the body can sometimes cause blindness e.g. [Feline Leukaemia](#).
- **Tumours in the eye** - tumours in and around the eye can cause blindness.

- **Blood in the eye** - often due to high blood pressure (common in cats with [kidney disease](#)).
- **Anaesthetic complications** - very occasionally, complications under anaesthetic can lead to blindness (this is rare).

When to contact your vet

Some causes of blindness are reversible so it's important to contact your vet as soon as you notice your cat having problems with their vision. **You know your cat best, always contact your vet if you're concerned.**

Find out more about PDSA's veterinary services

Outlook

Your cat's outlook will depend on why they have lost their sight, how that illness otherwise affects their health, how they respond to treatment, and most importantly, how they cope with their loss of vision. Cats tend to cope well with losing their sight slowly, but sudden loss of vision can be extremely stressful and difficult to cope with. If your cat is struggling to adapt, sadly, it may be kindest to consider [putting them to sleep](#).

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