

Stress cystitis (feline idiopathic cystitis) in cats

Overview

Does your cat regularly suffer with problems peeing? Do their symptoms keep coming back? If your cat has regular episodes of cystitis with no obvious cause they may be suffering with 'Feline idiopathic cystitis (FIC)'.

FIC is a condition that often causes cystitis on and off throughout a cat's life. Although we aren't sure exactly what causes FIC, it's believed that **stress** and **obesity** have big roles to play.

There is no cure for FIC but there are lots of treatments that can help improve symptoms and reduce the chance of it returning.

It's very important to contact your vet if you notice your cat having problems peeing. Severe cases of FIC can cause a blocked bladder. A blocked bladder stops a cat from being able to pee which can be fatal if not treated quickly.

WARNING

**Is your cat trying to pee but not passing anything?
This could be a blocked bladder which is an
emergency.**

**Never wait to see if this improves, call your vet and
have your cat seen ASAP.**

What is FIC?

Feline idiopathic cystitis (FIC) is a condition that causes a painful, inflamed bladder and problems peeing. Symptoms vary from mild to severe and often come and go over time. 'Flare ups' of FIC last from a few days to a few weeks and once symptoms improve they often come back quickly.

No one knows exactly what causes FIC but there are some factors that are known to increase a cat's chance of developing it. These include:

- **Stress** – stress is a big risk factor for FIC because it causes inflammation of the bladder lining
- **Obesity**
- Lack of regular exercise
- Regular diet changes
- Living indoors most of the time
- Living with another cat (or several)
- Being male
- Being long haired

Symptoms

Symptoms of FIC can develop very quickly. Always speak to your vet if your cat has any of the symptoms below.

- **Not able to pee (EMERGENCY – call your vet straight away)**
- Peeing more often than usual
- Straining to pee
- Blood in pee (pink or red)
- Pain when peeing

- Peeing outside of the litter tray (commonly in the bath, sink or on cold hard floors)
- Grooming excessively causing hair loss between their back legs

Cats with FIC often suffer with symptoms of cystitis on and off throughout their lives.

When to contact your vet

Contact your vet if your cat has any of the symptoms above or you are worried they may have FIC. If cystitis is left for too long it can cause a blocked bladder which can be life threatening.

If possible, take a urine sample to your vet appointment. Watch our video how to collect a urine sample from your cat.
www.pdsa.org.uk/FIC

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You know your cat best. If they don't have the symptoms listed above but you are still concerned it's always best to contact your vet.

Treatment

There is no cure for FIC, instead you can manage your cat's symptoms by making multiple changes to their lifestyle:

- **Pain relief**

Cystitis is painful, pain relief is very important to help your cat recover. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs are often used to settle the bladder and make your cat more comfortable.

- **Encourage drinking**

Strong urine is irritating to the bladder, if your cat drinks more it will dilute their pee. Tips for increasing water intake:

- Provide lots of water bowls in various locations around the house.
- Ideally use glass or ceramic bowls as opposed to metal or plastic (which can leave a bad taste in the water).
- Use wide, shallow bowls because they stop a cat's whiskers touching the sides of the containers which is irritating for them.
- Water fountains – some cats prefer to drink moving water.
- Feed wet food – it contains a lot of water. Feeding wet food or soaked biscuits can significantly increase your cat's water intake.

- **Reduce stress**

Even if they don't show it, cats are sensitive creatures who get stressed very easily. Stressed cats are much more likely to develop FIC. It is often very difficult to tell if your cat is stressed and know exactly what is stressing them out. To make a start at reducing stress, make sure your cat has multiple water bowls, food bowls, litter trays and

hiding places. Read our guide on how to recognise and reduce stress in your cat.

- **Weight management**

Overweight cats are much more likely to develop FIC, read our guide on how to keep your cat slim, fit and active.

- **Specialist food**

Specialist diets have been designed to help keep your cat's bladder as healthy as possible. Speak to your vet about whether your cat would benefit from eating a specialised diet.

- **Bladder supplements**

Bladder supplements are thought to provide a soothing action to the inside of the bladder although there is no proof to that they help every cat with FIC.

Cost

A cat with FIC may need to be hospitalised and is likely to need lifelong management. Treatment can cost several hundred pounds (cost depends on the specific problem).

Always speak to your vet if you can't afford the treatment they have recommended, there may be other options.

If you are struggling with veterinary fees, PDSA offers free or reduced cost treatment to eligible clients. We strongly recommend insuring your pets as soon as you get them so that you are covered for any problems. Always check if your insurance policy covers lifelong conditions.

My cat isn't getting better, what next?

Contact your vet if your cat's symptoms keep coming back or get worse at any point. Although there's no cure for FIC, by working closely with your vet, there are lots of ways you can control the symptoms and keep your cat comfortable. With long-term management, most cats will have a good quality of life for many years.

Take your cat straight to your vet if they are struggling to pee.

Preventing FIC

Preventing FIC is very similar to managing the condition. Keep stress to a minimum, keep your cat a healthy weight, make sure they get enough exercise, encourage them to drink, feed them wet food or a specific diet designed for bladder health (if your vet advises to do so).

Published: September 2018