

My cats' not eating

Overview

Have you suddenly noticed your cat's not eating? We know how worrying that can be. Most cats will happily graze on their food throughout the day, so when this natural behaviour stops, it's usually a sign that something is wrong.

Anorexia is a term used to describe a decreased appetite or a complete loss of appetite, and there can be many different causes for this.

Take your cat to the vet for a full check-up if they have stopped eating.

How will I know if my cats' not eating?

If you have more than one cat, it can be difficult to tell if one of them isn't eating properly. Other signs to look out for include:

- Weight loss
- Being quieter or sleeping more than usual (lethargy)
- Jaundice (where the skin / whites of the eyes turn yellow)
- Dribbling more than usual
- A painful mouth (hissing or backing away from food after trying to eat)
- Vomiting and/or diarrhoea

Why is my cat not eating?

There are very many reasons why your cat may be off their food. To start with, your vet will try to work out whether it's a medical or behavioural problem. Some of the common causes include:

Tooth and gum disease

- Tooth and gum disease (tooth root abscesses, tartar build up, broken teeth and gingivitis) can cause enough pain to stop your cat eating.

Kidney disease

- Kidney disease very often causes a cat to feel unwell and reduces their appetite.

Pain

- Your cat may stop eating if they are hurting somewhere, it may not be obvious what is hurting them and you may just notice vague symptoms (for example being hunched up).

Stress

- Stress can cause a cat to stop eating. For example, a change to their usual routine, moving home or being bullied by another cat.

High temperature

- High temperatures (fever) are often caused by infections and usually cause a decrease in appetite.

Change of food or feeding location

- Changing your cat's food suddenly or moving their food bowl from its usual place can cause a cat to stop eating. Read our guide on how to safely change your cat's diet.

Other diseases

- A lot of other diseases will cause a decrease in appetite. For example heart failure, pancreatitis, liver disease and cancer.

When to contact your vet

Contact your vet if your cat stops eating. It's important to find out the reason your cat is off their food but it is also important to get them eating again. Liver problems can develop if a cat stops eating completely (hepatic lipidosis).

You know your cat best. If you are concerned it's always best to contact your vet.

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