

Bladder infection (UTI) in cats

Overview

A bladder infection is also sometimes called a 'urinary tract infection (UTI)' or 'bacterial cystitis'.

A UTI is an infection inside the bladder caused by bacteria, it's a painful condition that causes problems urinating. Serious illness can develop if a UTI is left without treatment.

Cats don't often develop a UTI for no reason – there is usually a cause behind it (for example a bladder stone).

It is important to contact your vet for an appointment as soon as you notice any symptoms of cystitis.

WARNING

**Is your cat trying to wee 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.**

Symptoms

- Peeing more often than usual
- Peeing little and often
- Spending more time than usual in their litter tray
- Straining to urinate
- XX Blood in urine
- Pain (crying) when peeing
- Visiting the litter tray without weeing

- Weeing outside of the litter tray (commonly in the bath/on the bathroom floor)
- Over grooming their bottom area – this can cause loss of hair

When to contact your vet

Contact your vet for an appointment if your cat has symptoms of cystitis. If cystitis is left for too long it can cause serious illness such as a blocked bladder, which can be life threatening.

Taking a urine sample to your vets can be very helpful.

Take a look at our video: 'HOW TO: Collect a urine sample from your cat.' www.pdsa.org.uk/UTIcat

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

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Causes

Cats younger than 10 rarely develop a UTI for no reason - it's usually because something has enabled an infection to develop, for example:

- Bladder stones / crystals
- Diabetes

- Kidney disease
- Bladder tumour (rare)

Treatment

Antibiotics

- A short course of antibiotics will usually cure a UTI. However, because bacterial cystitis is rare your vet may decide to run a urine test before using antibiotics.
- If your cat is given antibiotics it is very important to follow the instructions and complete the course. If you stop your cat's antibiotics early this may result in the infection not being cleared properly and could make it more difficult to treat in the future.
- If you can't give your cat their antibiotics, it's important to get in touch with your vet.

Anti-inflammatory medication

- Anti-inflammatory medication is excellent at soothing bladder pain and inflammation.

Strong pain relief

- If your cat is in severe pain even after having anti-inflammatory pain relief, your vet may decide to give stronger pain relief alongside it.

Bladder supplements

- Bladder supplements are designed to sooth the lining of the bladder, although, there is no solid evidence to prove they work.

Outlook

UTI's (without an underlying cause) usually clear up very quickly, usually two to three days after a course of treatment from your vet.

If your cat doesn't get better quickly or the symptoms come back quickly your vet may want to find out what is causing the problem.

Further investigation may include:

- Urine tests
- X-rays
- Blood tests
- Ultrasound scan
- Exploratory surgery and biopsies

Prevention

There isn't anything you can do to specifically prevent bladder infections in cats. However, the tips below will help you keep your cat's bladder as healthy as possible.

Food and drink

- Encourage your cat to drink lots of water– this helps to keep the kidneys and bladder healthy.
- Some cats like fresh water, others prefer stale and many cats love running water and like drinking from cat water fountains.
- Feed your cat wet food to increase their water intake.

Weight

- Keep your cat a healthy weight and make sure they get enough exercise. Overweight cats are more at risk of cystitis.

Reduce stress

- Stress causes a specific type of cystitis called FIC – this is one of the most common causes of cystitis in cats. Ensure your cat's life is as stress-free as possible.

Regular checks

- If your cat is at high risk of cystitis (i.e. if they are diabetic or have kidney disease), your vet might suggest regular urine tests to pick up infections before symptoms occur.

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