

BANISHING BLADDER PROBLEMS

They're among the most common of feline ailments, and can cause your cat a lot of discomfort and distress. A natural approach can help treat and prevent these issues.

by Deva Khalsa, VMD



When a cat starts making frequent trips to the litterbox, or suddenly begins urinating in unusual places like the bathtub, he's likely letting you know he has a urinary tract problem. Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD), for example, is a relatively common problem in cats. Other cats get cystitis at the drop of a hat. The good news is that natural supplements and homeopathic methods can help treat, and more importantly, avoid and prevent these bladder problems.

What to watch for

Anyone who has had cystitis can attest to that uncomfortable feeling of "needing to go". It's the same for cats. In some

cases, the urine may be pink or red. If your cat chooses a tile floor or the bathtub, it's pretty easy to tell if the urine is blood tinged. If your cat is using the litterbox, a handy trick is to mix shredded white toilet paper into the litter.

In a "blocked" cat, urine crystals or mucous block the urethra. Blocked cats exhibit frequent but fruitless straining along

**Dandelion promotes urination
and flushes the urinary tract.**

HOMEOPATHIC HELPERS

Homeopathic remedies are also helpful for bladder problems and can be easily found in health food stores. Or, consult a homeopathic veterinarian. The remedies can be administered orally two to four times a day, depending on the severity of symptoms.

- *Apis Mellifica* is a good remedy to give when the urine is blood tinged.
- *Cantharis* is excellent for cystitis that causes irritation and a frequent urge to urinate.
- *Causticum* is indicated for chronic cystitis.



with signs of stress, discomfort and painful vocalization. Urinary obstructions are far more prevalent in male cats and constitute a veterinary emergency.

Various causes

Researchers are still looking for the causes of FLUTD. The theories have changed over the past 20 years. One historic cause was thought to be the ash content in cat food, but that's been proven incorrect. Until the late 1980s, struvite crystals were commonly found in urinalyses. More currently, calcium oxalate stones have also been found to be very common.

Different crystals require different treatments, so an analysis of the urine is necessary to determine the exact crystal type. Interestingly, as the urine sits after collection, some

crystals dissolve while others grow, just like in a high school science experiment. When having your cat's urine checked for crystals, get it to the lab as soon as possible after it's collected.

Diet and pH

In many cases, the cause of simple cystitis is a bacterial infection and your veterinarian will prescribe antibiotics. Blocked cats must be rushed to the veterinarian and have their urethral passage unplugged along with supportive emergency care. Unfortunately, cats that get FLUTD tend to get it more than once.

Learning some simple facts about diet and nutrition demonstrate Ben Franklin's observation that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Diet can have a profound effect on bladder health. Having evolved on the African savannah, felines have a low thirst drive. Prey animals contain about 70% water. By contrast, dry kibble has only 10% water, so cats that eat only kibble will have more concentrated urine and a higher tendency to form crystals. Feeding more canned food and even watering it down a bit increases liquid intake. Raw food diets also provide more dietary liquid.

The pH of the urine is important because crystals need a specific pH in which to form. Cats prefer protein rich foods, but they evolved eating whole prey and were conveniently provided with vegetable matter and greens from the prey's intestines. Unfortunately, most processed commercial pet foods, by nature of their preparation methods, are stripped of essential plant nutrients. Healthy nutrients such as vitamin C and cranberry work to acidify the urine and prevent the buildup of certain crystals.

Synergistic vitamins

Vitamins K1 and D3 work together to help metabolize and process minerals. K1 prevents calcium from washing into the bladder while D3 creates efficient mineral metabolism. Vitamin D3 also significantly improves immune function. A high incidence of vitamin D3 deficiency is now being identified in humans, so keeping an eye on your cat's vitamin D3 is essential. Called the "sunshine vitamin," D3 becomes biologically active when the human body is exposed to sunlight. Cats don't have the necessary components in their skin to do this, so they need to get their Vitamin D3 from a supplement, raw liver or cod liver oil. This new research indicates that vitamins K1 and D3 may be very important in preventing urinary crystal formation.



Super-foods to the rescue

Phytochemicals are organic compounds in plants that have protective or disease-preventive properties. They are now a huge focus in scientific research. Sometimes called “super-foods”, they work to promote health in the body for a much longer time than vitamins and minerals. For example, vitamin C only acidifies the urine for a few hours after it’s taken.

- Cranberry does the same (and more) for almost an entire day. It contains a polysaccharide called mannose, which selectively binds to bacteria, carrying them out of the bladder. In fact, bacteria prefer mannose to the cells of the bladder wall. Taking cranberry on a daily basis works to prevent and help treat urinary tract infections.
- Milk thistle is an herb that’s been used for centuries. Its benefits on the liver are well publicized, but many people are not aware that it also works to prevent crystal and stone formation in the bladder.
- Dandelion promotes urination and flushes the urinary tract.
- Blueberries offer a diverse range of micronutrients including manganese, B6, vitamins C and K. They have so many health benefits that a Berry Health Benefits Symposium has been held every year since 2007. Their positive effects range from preventing urinary tract infections and cancer to decreasing brain damage. In fact, all super foods have a wide range of health benefits.

An excellent supplement for cats, called Deserving Pets, contains all the above mentioned vitamins, minerals and super foods.



Cranberries (below) and blueberries are both good for urinary tract health.

Between your veterinarian, correct dietary management, a good supplement and some homeopathic remedies, you now have some excellent tools to alleviate and prevent FLUTD and other urinary and bladder problems in your beloved cat. 🐾

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