

Feline Idiopathic Cystitis (FIC)

Formerly known as Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease



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What is FIC?

Feline Idiopathic Cystitis is an inflammation of the bladder, that is not caused by bacteria, but usually caused by distressing living conditions (similar to the Chronic Urinary Bladder Pain Syndrome in humans – interstitial cystitis).

This condition is very painful and can be reoccurring or in the worst case lead to a blocked urethra in tomcats. A blockage is life threatening and a veterinarian needs to be seen immediately.

Affected cats are often very sensitive and (due to a hormone imbalance) more susceptible to stress. Additionally they have more pain receptors in their bladder wall. Therefore, inflammation and infections are more painful for these cats, which causes more stress – a vicious cycle.

More often than not patients with this condition are overweight and tend to be reluctant to exercise. Indoor cats and felines living in a multi-cat household seem to be more affected.

Symptoms

Possible Symptoms **FIC**:

- increased urination (often and small amounts)
- passing urine outside the litter tray or in other places around the house
- bloody urine
- painful urination

Possible Symptoms* of a **blocked urethra**:

- going in and out of the litter tray
- pressing and/or vocalizing during unsuccessful urination (**take care** not to mistake it for constipation as sometimes during the urinary pressing faeces is passed)
- overgrooming of the penile area
- severe increase in kidney parameters in the blood (urea, creatinine and phosphorus) as well as electrolytes (potassium). This can lead to collapse, shock, lethargy and can be life threatening

* Not all symptoms need to occur simultaneously

Diagnosis

- analyses of the clinical history from owners and referring vets
- clinical examination
- imaging (x-ray and ultrasound) to exclude bladder/urethral stones and tumors
- blood and urine analyses (including bacteriology)



Treatment options

Feline Idiopathic Cystitis is not curable unfortunately. To avoid re-occurrence and to keep your cat symptom free for longer, lifelong management is necessary. As it is not an infection, antibiotics are not going to work.

1) Reduction of stressors for your cat

Learn to see the environment through the eyes of your cat

- uncover current stressors (e.g. moving house, changes to furniture, family constellation or building work, sickness in the family, new cat in the neighbourhood, family on holiday etc.)
- conflict avoidance in a multi cat household (often the “victim” is actually the stressor; aggression towards other cats is often caused by being taunted by them)

Suggestions for Solutions:

- Increasing the available space for hiding, observing, climbing and being at peace
 - access to the outdoors
 - create different levels in the room (e.g. shelves)
 - provide many hidey holes
 - opportunities for scratching (horizontal and vertical)
 - build an enclosed outdoor space
- Create opportunities for play (better short but often)
 - increase physical activity with weight loss as a result
 - trial out different toys
 - possibly take your cat for a walk on a leash (not suitable for every cat)
- Separate cats if everything else fails

2) Increase water intake

Drinking more is more effective than diet food as diluted urine will cause less irritation to the bladder wall

- fill different wide water containers (so that their whiskers do not touch the edges)
- provide flowing water (e.g. water fountain)
- supply water in various spaces (not next to food)
- offer suitably flavoured water (e.g. add unseasoned fish or meat broth)
- feed mainly wet food and possibly add water (a diet change should be done over time)



Treatment options

3) Management of the litter tray

Ideally, cats have access to the outdoors. If this is not possible

- always offer at least one more toileting option than cats in the household (in different areas, two toilets next to each other count as one)
- the location and design of the litter tray should support a calm and accessible environment (flat litter trays for elderly cats) with the option to flee
- size: the litter tray should be large enough for the cat to turn easily and to be able to dig (the diagonal diameter is in the best case scenario twice the length of the cat)
- preferably the litter box should not have a lid as the cat needs to be able to sit upright without touching the top of the box
- hygiene is important and the toilet needs to be scooped at least once a day, better after each use. Thorough cleaning should be carried out once a week at a minimum
- trial out different litter to find your cat's favourite (use unperfumed litter, the smell of additives is too much for their sensitive nose)

4) Feeding

- if possible allow a natural feeding behavior with stalking and “hunting” the “prey” (e.g. throw dry food, fill wet food into little containers for them to scoop out to create food play rituals)
- avoid sudden food changes (stressor). Only change food if necessary but slowly and gradually over several weeks

5) If necessary administer calming medication (only prescribed by a veterinarian) when stress is foreseeable

Not all problems apply to each patient and not all measurements for solutions are suitable for every cat. Changes of all kind should always be carried out slowly and with a lot of patience for the individual needs and character of your cat. A great deal of day-to-day solutions need to be practiced.

To support you in the management of this disorder we will analyse the individual problems of your cat with advice to improve life quality and conditions as well as provide behavioural therapy. Please do not hesitate to contact us.