

Bladder care and stress in cats



pdosa
HELP A VET HELP A PET

Stress in cats

The life of our pet cats is very different from that of their wild ancestors.

Usually this doesn't trigger any problems but occasionally there can be certain symptoms of disease that are caused by the domesticated pet cat lifestyle.



Cats prefer

- Privacy – cats are naturally solitary animals and usually prefer to live apart from other cats
- Free access to food, water, litter tray and a safe sleeping area. The food, drink and litter tray should be separated if possible
- More than one litter tray for each cat in the house. If you have two cats, at least three litter trays are ideal
- Safe access to the outdoors
- A large territory
- Freedom to escape potentially stressful situations.

Things that make cats stressed

- Restricted outdoor access if they're used to going outside regularly
- Less control over access to food, water or litter trays
- Being forced to share their small territory with other cats, dogs and children
- Unpredictable litter tray cleaning or owner interaction
- Restricted access to litter trays
- Food, drink and litter tray in the same location.



Symptoms of stress can include:

- recurrent urinary problems
 - obesity
 - anorexia
 - over-grooming
 - intermittent vomiting
 - diarrhoea
 - high blood pressure.
-

Stress busters

You need to think about stress and your cat's lifestyle if they're diagnosed with feline idiopathic cystitis.

Paying attention to your cat's natural preferences is important, and if changes aren't made, cystitis may be recurrent.



So how can you reduce stress?

- Cats are naturally solitary animals and often prefer to live alone – so always consider how many cats you have.
- As solitary animals, cats don't like to share their resources. When providing litter trays, beds, food and water bowls, always try to provide one per cat plus one extra – and space them around the house so that cats can avoid each other if they want to.
- For cats that go outdoors, allow them to choose when they come and go – they'll know when it's safest for them to venture outside.
- For cats that live indoors only – make sure your cat has a stimulating environment full of toys and things to climb and explore. It's important for your cat's mental wellbeing.
- Provide hiding places – cats often prefer to be up high, where they feel safe.
- Try to keep to a daily routine. Cats are creatures of habit. If they know their lives stick to a familiar routine – that they already know is safe – it'll greatly help to reduce stress.





Your vet is always the best person to advise you of the treatment plan for your cat, but in all cases reducing stress and increasing water intake will go a long way towards helping your cat to recover – and these are simple things you can do at home to help your furry friend.

Feline lower urinary tract disease (FLUTD)

Feline lower urinary tract disease (FLUTD) is the term used to describe conditions that affect the urinary bladder and/or urethra of cats.

This can include feline idiopathic cystitis when there's no obvious underlying disease affecting the lower urinary tract.

Symptoms of FLUTD can include:

- Pain and straining when passing urine
- Urinating more frequently
- Passing blood in the urine
- Urinating in inappropriate places
- Over-grooming (due to pain and irritation).

Straining to urinate without passing anything – this is an emergency, and if you notice your cat doing this, you should contact your vet immediately.

Causes of FLUTD can include:

- Inflammation of the bladder with no known reason – feline idiopathic cystitis
- Bladder stones
- Bacterial infections
- Urethral plugs
- Cancer
- Crystals, like these, shown below, viewed under a microscope.

There are simple tests that can be run on a fresh urine sample to help your vet work out the cause of your cat's urinary problems. If it's possible please take one along to your appointment.

Straining to urinate without passing anything is an emergency



Treatment of FLUTD

Treatment will depend on the underlying cause, but most options will include:

- Increasing water intake
- Feeding a special diet – your vet will recommend which food is best for your cat
- Encouraging urination – always make sure there are enough litter trays for the number of cats in the house – one per cat plus one extra. Have trays in different locations around the house with different types of litter to see which your cat prefers
- Reducing stress – this may be hard as your cat may be stressed by a change you can't see, like a new cat in your area. Try to think of anything you have changed in your house or garden and, if you can, go back to what you were doing before, e.g. a change in their food can stress some cats out
- Weight loss – obese cats are more prone to FLUTD
- Encouraging exercise.





Tips to help cats drink more include

- Feed **wet food** rather than dry.
 - Use **glass** or **ceramic water bowls** rather than plastic. Plastic leaves an unpleasant 'taste' for cats.
 - Use **large, shallow water bowls**, filled to the brim. Cats like to see around them while eating and drinking, and also don't like their whiskers brushing the side of the bowl.
 - Keep the water bowl **away** from the food bowl and litter tray.
 - Have **multiple water bowls** in different locations, especially if you have more than one cat.
 - Consider using a **water fountain** or **dripping tap** – cats often prefer running water.
 - **Flavour** the drinking water e.g. drain a tin of tuna in spring water, make ice cubes, and add to water to encourage drinking.
 - Use **bottled spring water** or **collected rainwater**; some cats dislike the taste of tap water.
-

For more information about FLUTD and other health problems in cats visit
www.pdsa.org.uk/taking-care-of-your-pet



For more information on the five welfare needs or further advice
on looking after your pet, visit:

pdsa.org.uk/pet-health-advice