

## Breathing Problems in Cats

### Overview

- Generally, you shouldn't hear or see your cat breathing unless you look and listen very closely.
- If your cat has a breathing problem, you might notice them breathing loudly, quickly, coughing, taking small, shallow breaths, or in very severe cases, mouth breathing (panting).
- Contact your vet straight away if your cat is struggling to breathe, mouth breathing, or has collapsed.
- Contact your vet for a check-up if your cat has mild signs of a breathing problem.

### General information



As a rule, you shouldn't be able to hear or see your cat breathing unless you look and listen very closely. If your cat's breathing seems noisy, fast, or is causing their chest or belly to move a lot, this is often a sign of a problem. It's also important to be aware that cats nearly always breathe through their nose, so if your cat is panting or breathing through their mouth, it's a sign they are either extremely stressed, or really struggling to breathe.

If your cat is struggling to breathe, they might show the following signs:

- Heavy, noisy, fast or shallow breathing
- Panting/open mouth breathing

- Pale gums
- Collapse
- Sudden/unexplained death

**Never ignore a breathing problem (especially mouth breathing), stay calm, keep your cat calm, and contact your vet straight away.**

If your cat has a less serious breathing problem, you may notice symptoms such as:

- Coughing
- Sneezing
- A runny nose
- Weepy eyes
- Not eating
- Low energy

If you're unsure whether your cat has a breathing problem, or how quickly they need to be seen by a vet, try our symptom checker.

[Symptom checker](#)

## Causes

There are quite a few different conditions that can cause breathing problems:

- **Shock or stress**
- **Feline asthma**
- **[Cat flu](#)**: and other respiratory infections
- **Accidents and injuries**: such as [being hit by a car](#)
- **Heart problems**
- **[Heat stroke](#)**
- **Anaemia**
- **Certain cancers**

- **Flat faced breeds** - flat-faced breeds of cat, such as [Persians](#), often have breathing problems due to the shape of their face and nose.

## When to contact your vet

In many cases, you won't see any symptoms of a breathing problem until it is quite serious, so it's very important to get your cat checked if you notice any changes in their breathing. When transporting a cat with a breathing problem, it's important to **keep them calm** because stress is likely to make the situation much worse.

- **Contact your vet immediately if your cat is struggling to breathe, panting, or breathing with an open mouth.**
- **If your cat stops breathing, start [CPR](#) and contact your vet straight away**
- **Never wait to see if things improve. The faster your cat is treated, the better their chance of survival.**

## Less urgent problems

If your cat has mild symptoms of a breathing problem but they aren't struggling to breathe, contact your vet for an appointment.

**Am I eligible for PDSA veterinary treatment?**

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