

## **About FLUTD** **(Feline lower urinary tract disease)**

Feline lower urinary tract disease (FLUTD) is not one disease, but a set of diseases affecting the lower urinary tract of the cat. It afflicts a small percentage of the cat population. The reported rate of new cases each year is less than one percent of the cat population. Approximately ten percent of cats that come to veterinary clinics have some type of lower urinary tract disease.

For many years, this set of diseases was lumped together under the name Feline Urologic Syndrome (FUS). Too often this term became associated with a specific disease. However, the affected cat could be suffering from one of a collection of urinary tract diseases that have common symptoms, but unfortunately a diagnosis with an etiology (or specific cause) is not often made.

FLUTD is often subdivided into categories based on specific observations. These categories include:

- Those cats with uroliths (urinary tract stones)
- Those with urethral obstruction
- Those with urinary tract infection
- Those with cystitis (bladder inflammation) but without stones, infection or urethral obstruction

In other words, lower urinary tract disease is not a “what is” but a “what are.” It is a group of diseases and because it is more than one disease, there is more than one cause. The complex nature of urinary tract diseases requires a complete veterinary diagnosis and treatment.

### **Why is it some cats develop FLUTD problems?**

FLUTD can occur in both male and female cats, and more commonly happen in cats between two and six years of age. However, cats of any age may be affected. FLUTD tends to be associated with a number of factors, including stress of any kind affecting the cat, obesity, cats housed indoors, urolithiasis (or stone formation), bacterial infections, seasonal weather, genetics or a difference among breeds, anatomic abnormalities, and stone formation in the lower urinary tract. Because male cats have a narrow urethra, they tend to be more prone to complete obstruction by the stones they form than are females, and without prompt veterinary treatment these obstructions can be serious.

### **How is FLUTD diagnosed?**

For accurate diagnosis and treatment of serious feline health problems, you should see a veterinarian first.

Typical symptoms of FLUTD may include:

- Frequent trips to the litter box
- Failure to use the litter box and urinating in unusual places
- Straining to urinate with little urine expressed
- Blood in the urine
- Depression, dehydration, lack of appetite and sometimes vomiting
- Crying when urinating or licking its genital area excessively

FLUTD can be a serious condition, and following diagnostic tests, veterinarians should recommend a course of treatment.

### **What can you do?**

Steps to take in order to help maintain urinary tract health are:

- Provide drinking water at all times
- Keep the litter box clean and easily accessible to the cat and locate the box where the cat will have some privacy
- Encourage your cat to exercise, especially for indoor cats

- Feed free choice (food available at all times)
- Maintain the cat at its proper weight
- Minimize stress factors such as sudden changes in environment, exposure to harsh weather conditions and emotional upsets
- Schedule regular veterinary checkups

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

- **How can you determine if your cat will develop UTH problems?**  
There is no exact way of determining if your cat will develop these problems. However, less than one percent of the cat population is diagnosed with FLUTD annually. Make sure you take your cat in for an annual veterinarian visit. If your cat is exhibiting unusual behavior, schedule a veterinarian visit right away.
- **Can cats get UTH problems from other cats?**  
No, UTH problems are not infectious and cannot be transmitted to other cats
- **Can ash or magnesium in the diet cause problems with urinary tract health?**  
No, magnesium and ash do not cause lower urinary tract disease. At one time it was thought that too much magnesium in the diet increased the chance of struvite crystal formation and the risk of lower urinary tract disease. Ash is the measure of the total mineral content of a particular food. Ash is a necessary part of any nutritionally complete and balanced cat food because it contains magnesium, among other minerals which is an essential nutrient.
- **Is gender an issue for FLUTD? If so, why?**  
Both males and females may be affected by FLUTD. However, due to the male having a narrow urethra (the canal that carries the urine from the bladder), it tends to be prone to obstruction of urine in the bladder. Urinary stones may then become lodged and cause a blockage in the urethra resulting in the need for prompt medical attention.

*Courtesy of Purina*

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