

Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD) is a life-long syndrome affecting the urinary system of many cats. The underlying cause for this condition is not fully understood.

The syndrome has been found to be more common in middle-aged, neutered or overweight cats, cats with little or no access outside, and cats that eat dry food only.

Clinical signs may include:

- > Frequent urination
- > Straining to urinate
- > Licking the penis
- > Passing small drips of urine
- > Blood in the urine
- > Urinating outside the litter tray, and/or frequent trips the litter tray.

Ultimately, if your cat becomes 'blocked', they may strain in the litter tray for some time, vocalising and not be able to pass any urine at all. This is a true emergency, and urgent veterinary attention is required.

What is a 'blocked cat'?

Obstructive FLUTD is the most severe form of this disease, where there is complete obstruction of the bladder.

Cats will die if left untreated and urgent veterinary attention is required. In this situation, your cat will need to be admitted to hospital and have a series of procedures including pain relief, blood tests, IV fluids and a short anaesthetic. This allows the bladder obstruction to be relieved. Several days in hospital with a catheter in place is often required.



The risk of re-obstruction is as high as 40% in male cats. Some cats that frequently re-obstruct despite excellent management at home may be candidates for a surgery called a perineal urethrostomy to reduce the risk of future episodes.

Non-obstructive FLUTD can usually be managed on an outpatient basis with a range of medications, pain-relief and lifestyle modifications. It is ideal to see the vet as soon as your cat begins showing initial signs in the hopes of preventing progression to obstructive FLUTD.

Why does it happen and what can I do?

The cause of FLUTD is not well understood, despite much research. There has been an association found between highly stressed or anxious cats and FLUTD. There is potentially an increased risk in multi-cat households, or if two cats do not get along well.

Often an underlying cause is not found. Blood tests, urine tests and X-rays should always be performed as some cats have crystals, stones, or mucous plugs. Less commonly signs may arise from a urinary tract infection, anatomical defect or a tumour.

If your cat has been diagnosed with non-obstructive or obstructive FLUTD there are many important considerations once your cat is at home. The international cat care society has published general guidelines which can help improve your cat's comfort at home and reduce the chance of re-obstructing again in their lifetime (icatcare.org).

After discharge, FLUTD is a life-long syndrome that requires very dedicated management at home:

- > Encourage drinking, for example providing a ceramic water drinking fountain
- > Feeding wet food and/or a prescription diet
- > Multiple litter trays per cat in various locations
- > One litter tray per cat plus one extra
- > Separate food and water bowls for each cat
- > Somewhere to rest and hide
- > Opportunity to play and go outside (if safe to do so)
- > Synthetic Pheromone diffusers such as 'Feliway'

