

# Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease

## ***What is FLUTD?***

Feline lower urinary tract disease (FLUTD) is an inflammatory condition of the bladder and/or urethra in cats. This inflammation may be caused by urinary crystal formation, bacterial infection or (very rarely) cancer, but often a cause is never found. Inflammation in the urinary tract causes a variety of symptoms including increased frequency of urination, difficulty urinating, inappropriate urination (going outside the litterbox), blood in the urine, and vocalizing (crying or howling) when trying to urinate.

Feline lower urinary tract disease usually develops early in a cat's life, and tends to cause episodes of urinary issues throughout their lifetime. Understanding some of the risk factors of FLUTD can help in managing this condition to prevent recurrence of urinary signs.

## ***Which cats are most at risk of developing FLUTD?***

- Lifestyle: Overweight cats that get little exercise
- Diet: Cats who eat a dry kibble-based diet
- Stress: Cats who are sensitive to changes in their environment
  - Stress promotes inflammation throughout the body, and the bladder is very susceptible to this inflammation. Inflammation in the bladder causes discomfort while urinating, increased frequency of urination and inappropriate elimination habits (going outside the litterbox)

## ***What are some management strategies to help cats with FLUTD?***

- Managing Lifestyle and Diet
  - Since overweight cats are at higher risk of developing FLUTD, encouraging weight loss may help prevent further episodes of urinary issues. This can be accomplished in a few ways:
    - Feeding to your cat's ideal weight rather than to their current weight or free feeding
    - Transitioning to a weight loss diet, ideally a diet that promotes both weight loss and urinary tract health, such as *Hills Prescription Diet Metabolic + Urinary*
    - Encouraging exercise – using lasers and other toys to promote activity
  - One of the most common causes of FLUTD (inflammation in the bladder) is urinary crystals. Transitioning to a diet that dissolves and prevents re-formation of crystals is an essential component of managing FLUTD, especially if crystals are identified in your cat's urine.
    - *Hills Prescription Diet C/D Urinary Care* changes the pH of your cat's urine to dissolve crystals and prevent them from re-forming
  - Maximizing water intake will help flush out urinary crystals, bacteria and inflammatory cells and will promote urinary tract health long term.
    - Feeding a canned diet, which contains extra moisture, is ideal for cats with FLUTD
    - Ensure that your cat has free access to several sources of fresh water in the house
    - Adding a small amount of tuna juice or low sodium chicken broth to your cat's water may encourage them to drink more

- Managing Stress and Inflammation

- Stress promotes inflammation of the bladder, therefore minimizing stress minimizes bladder inflammation and the resultant symptoms of FLUTD. This can be accomplished by:
  - Minimizing changes to your cat's environment (moving furniture around, having visitors over frequently, adopting new pets, etc)
  - Transitioning to a diet that both promotes urinary health and reduces stress, such as *Hills Prescription Diet C/D Urinary Care + Stress*
  - Using a feline pheromone spray or diffuser, such as Feliway, which reduces anxiety
- Since inflammation of the bladder is a central component of FLUTD, anti-inflammatories are often used short-term to control flare ups
  - Your cat may be prescribed an anti-inflammatory medication called Onsior to reduce inflammation and discomfort in the bladder, which will help control urinary signs
- If a large amount of bacteria was identified on urinalysis, your cat may be prescribed an antibiotic to control this bacteria and therefore reduce any inflammation it may be causing

- Managing Litterbox Habits

- It is ideal to have more litterboxes than there are cats in a household
  - A good number to aim for is # cats + 1 = # litterboxes; therefore, one cat should have two litterboxes, two cats should have three litterboxes, etc
- Litterboxes should be spaced out in the house, ideally in places where your cat prefers to go
  - Make sure that your cat can get in and out of their litterbox without difficulty, as arthritis in older or overweight cats can make stepping in and out of the box difficult
- The litterboxes should be cleaned out once to twice a day and topped up with fresh litter each time to make sure your cat has enough material to bury their waste in
  - If your cat is using their litterbox normally, avoid changing the type of litter you use
  - If your cat is urinating outside of their litterbox, there is a chance they may not like the type of litter in it; if this is the case, clumping non-scented litter is often well accepted
  - The litter and the area around the litterbox can be sprayed with Feliway to reduce any anxiety associated with going in the litterbox and encourage your cat to use it again