

# ASK OUR VET, DR. SCHMIDT



## *Feline Idiopathic Cystitis?*

Feline idiopathic cystitis (FIC) is a complicated disease, formerly known as feline lower urinary tract disease and feline urologic syndrome, which means bladder inflammation of unknown cause. This syndrome is unique to cats. Symptoms may include bloody urine, straining to urinate, urinating in unusual places, urinary blockage (almost exclusively in male cats), and excessive grooming of the belly and urogenital areas. It is a **STERILE** process, meaning that it is often not an **INFECTION** which is the a common misconception. The average age of a feline with FIC is about 4 years old, although it can be seen in older and younger cats. Felines suffering from FIC tend to have recurring signs associated with environmental stress. The big question is “Why do only some cats get FIC?” The answer, unfortunately, is not simple. Some cats are unusually sensitive to environmental stress and, due to a complicated cascade of internal events, stress manifests in the urinary tract.

Diagnostic tests that are commonly run include: urinalysis, radiographs checking for urinary bladder stones, and urine culture. Blood work may be performed to rule out other diseases as well. As stated above, despite extensive testing, often there is no cause identified.

Treatments for this syndrome are divided into two parts 1) controlling the immediate episode and 2) preventing future episodes. There is no one way to treat this problem and often many approaches will be utilized. Different treatments to control a flare up of the disease include but are not limited to pain medications, fluids to help dilute the urine. The only treatment that research has shown to prevent future flare ups is the introduction of more water in the diet. This can be achieved by providing cats with a circulating water fountain (cats often enjoy fresh water, which is why they choose to drink from faucets or the shower) and changing to an all canned food diet. Other approaches that have been tried to prevent

future outbreaks include anti-anxiety medications, Adequan or Cosequin (medications that may increase the integrity of the lining of the urinary bladder), and environmental enrichment.

The prognosis for this syndrome varies in different households. Urethral obstruction which is often related to this syndrome is considered an emergency and is fatal if left untreated. Most cats will not become obstructed and will live a normal lifespan. Some cats suffering from FIC are euthanized or made into outdoor cats when they start urinating inappropriately in the house. If you think your cat could be suffering from FIC, please contact your veterinarian to discuss treatment options



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