

MOST COMMONLY SEEN CAT HEALTH PROBLEMS

No matter how well you care for your cats, they're bound to get sick eventually. Being aware of the signs of the most common health problems in cats and keeping a watchful eye on your cats' weight, eating and litter box habits, and behaviour will help you know when they need veterinary care.

CYSTITIS, STONES AND CRYSTALS

The group of symptoms that make up Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD)--cystitis, stones and crystals--are among the most common health problems affecting young and middle-aged cats. Cats that live strictly indoors and eat mostly- or all-dry-food diets are especially prone to these bladder issues. Symptoms include straining in the litter box, visiting the box often but producing very little urine, urinating outside the box and crying out when urinating. Transitioning the cat to an all-wet-food diet can prevent recurrences of FLUTD.

HYPERTHYROIDISM

Hyperthyroidism is one of the most common endocrine diseases in older cats. Symptoms include excessive drinking and urination, ravenous appetite accompanied by weight loss, increased activity and howling, especially at night. Hyperthyroidism can be managed with medication. A radioactive iodine treatment is a cure for many hyperthyroid cats.

DIABETES

Diabetes is also common in older cats. Symptoms include excessive drinking and urination, weight loss and sometimes weakness in the back legs (diabetic neuropathy). Diabetes can be managed with insulin injections, and many cats go into remission on an all-wet-food, high-protein, and low-carbohydrate diet.

CHRONIC RENAL FAILURE

Chronic Renal Failure (CRF) is the leading cause of death in older cats. Among the symptoms are weight loss, increased drinking and urination, loss of appetite, vomiting and bad breath. Giving subcutaneous fluids at home and adding phosphorous binders to the cat's food are two ways of slowing the progression of the disease.

DENTAL DISEASE

Most cats need to have their teeth cleaned at least once during their lives. Signs of dental disease are drooling, bad breath, difficulty eating and red, swollen gums. Many veterinarians prescribe a course of antibiotics before cleaning the cat's teeth to get rid of any infection in the mouth.

IRRITABLE BOWEL DISEASE

Irritable Bowel Disease (IBD) is common in cats of all ages, from kittens to seniors. Signs include vomiting and diarrhea. Food allergies are often the cause of IBD, and changes in diet along with medication can relieve the symptoms.

DERMATITIS

Fleas, food and environmental allergies and stress can all cause dermatitis, or skin disorders, in cats. Signs of dermatitis are excessive scratching, dandruff and flaky skin, dull fur and bald patches. Flea control, stress relief and some simple diet changes can relieve dermatitis in many cats.

HAIRBALLS

Cats that are plagued by recurring hairballs vomit often. Combing the cat several times a week, feeding wet food and making sure your cat's food contains a sufficient amount of fat should prevent hairballs.