



Connecticut Humane Society  
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## Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease/Cystitis

### *What is it?*

Cystitis is a general term for inflammation and irritation of the urinary bladder. Feline cystitis, or FLUTD, describes this condition in the cat. It is also called FIC, or Feline Idiopathic Cystitis.

### *What are the signs?*

Cats with this condition may have blood in their urine, strain to urinate and/or urinate in unusual places, and they may lick at the urinary opening. Male cats with these signs can experience complete blockage of urine flow and need immediate medical attention to prevent serious complications, including death.

### *What are the causes?*

In about 50% of young adult cats, a cause cannot be found (hence the term “Idiopathic“). Some cats develop the condition as a result of an infection and/or bladder stones. Urinary crystals were once thought to be central to the problem, but they seem to be less of an issue than once thought. Cats that get the syndrome are unusually sensitive to stress, and their bodies respond to stress with signs of cystitis.

### *How is it diagnosed?*

A urine sample may be checked for signs of infection or blood, but cystitis is often treated based on clinical signs alone.

### *What is the treatment?*

Treatments vary but stress must be minimized as much as possible. A urine sample is checked for infection and blood and antibiotics may be used if infection is found or suspected. If a blockage is present, a urinary catheter is passed to allow urine flow. X-rays may be taken to look for bladder stones and surgery is performed to remove them if found. Fluid administration to flush out the bladder is helpful, as are pain medications. Canned foods may be recommended to increase water intake, or a specific prescription diet may be required. Anti-anxiety medications and bladder lining protectants may help.

### *What should I do at home?*

Feed the diet recommended at the time of adoption. Consult with your regular veterinarian before altering or adding anything to the cat’s diet, including treats or table food. Minimize stress and provide multiple chances for environmental enrichment, including places to play, eat, and rest where no other animals will disturb the cat. Provide a litter box for each cat in the home, plus one extra. Use unscented clumping litter, scoop the boxes at least once daily, and empty and clean them with hot, soapy water weekly. Provide fresh, clean water at all times.

### *What should I expect in the future?*

If any of the signs of cystitis listed above develop, your cat’s regular veterinarian should be contacted. Straining in the litter box can be mistaken for constipation, but it is usually associated with straining to urinate. Episodes of cystitis may occur in the future since there is no guaranteed prevention.