

Cat Illnesses and Remedies

Feline infectious peritonitis (FIP)

Feline infectious peritonitis (FIP) is the most feared disease in catteries, as it is the leading infectious cause of cat death. FIP is caused by a coronavirus infection (FCoV). As it presents symptoms that are common to many other ailments and conditions, and tests are not always accurate, it is difficult to diagnose. In addition, symptoms can be very individualized, as there are two types of the disease, and different areas of the body may be affected in each cat.

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV)

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) belongs to the same family of viruses as HIV (human immunodeficiency virus). This family of viruses, known as Lentiviruses (or "slow virus") is species-specific. As the names imply, FIV is specific to cats, HIV is specific to people. They are known for life-long infection, and slowly progressive diseases. Weight loss, fever, loss of appetite, weakness and swollen lymph nodes

Treatment varies. Good nutrition and antibiotics required to treat secondary infections. Vaccines can be given but they are not always effective

Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV)

Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV) is a feline retrovirus that causes both fatal cancerous and non-cancerous diseases. It is easily destroyed by household detergents and bleach, warmth and drying, and does not survive long outside the cat. It is carried in saliva and tears, and perhaps the urine and faeces of infected cats. Due to the fact that it does not survive in the environment, it is contagious only by direct, prolonged, intimate wet contact with an infected cat that is shedding the virus. There is no evidence that FeLV is transmissible to humans or any other animal species other than members of the cat family.

Cat Ringworm

Cat ringworm is the most common infectious skin disease in domestic felines. It is not actually a worm at all, but a fungal infection spread through spores. If infected, your cat may or may not be bothered by [ringworm symptoms](#) as some cases are asymptomatic.

Ringworm is a self limiting disease, meaning that it can clear up by itself, but this may take months. It can be hard to cure, and the spores can be difficult to remove from a home, kennel, or shelter.

Feline Diabetes

Feline diabetes (diabetes mellitus), known as "sugar" diabetes, is a common disorder of the endocrine system in the cat. It often affects older, obese males, but can afflict any cat. As far as cat illness symptoms go, diabetes can be varied, since it presents differently in each cat, and it can lead to other conditions.

[Feline diabetes symptoms](#) will vary depending upon the type and stage of the disease. Excessive urination (polyuria), and excessive thirst (polydipsia) are the classic signs of diabetes in cats.

Although the exact cause in cats is not known, diabetes has been linked to pancreatic disease, hormonal imbalances, and certain medications. Obesity is a factor, so if your cat is overweight, be alert to feline diabetes symptoms. Unfortunately, genetic predisposition is also implicated.

Regardless of food intake levels, diabetic cats lose weight because the cells are unable to process glucose normally. As the disease progresses, it can lead to further metabolic disturbances and causes vomiting, loss of appetite, weakness, and dehydration. With treatment, a diabetic cat can live many good years, and some even lose their need for treatment over time.

Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD)

Feline lower urinary tract disease, or FLUTD, is a collection of clinical symptoms and signs that have varying causes. These symptoms can sometimes be confused with other conditions, and vary from patient to patient.

Diseases of the lower urinary tract occur frequently in cats, and more often in males than females. They affect the bladder and/or the urethra (the tube that the urine flows through from the bladder on its way out of the body).

In male cats, this condition can become an obstructed urinary tract, which is a life threatening disease. FLUTD used to be known as feline urologic syndrome, or FUS. The name was changed to encourage better diagnosis of the root causes of the symptoms, leading to better treatment.

Gastrointestinal Parasites in Cats

There are a number of [cat parasites](#) that fall into the gastrointestinal category. These feline parasites are basically of two types: [worms in cats](#) (such as [roundworms](#) , [hookworms](#), tapeworms, heartworms or stomach worms) or single-celled (as in *Isospora*, *Giardia*, or [Toxoplasma gondii](#)) organisms.

Since most cat parasite infections are passed from cat to cat, the chances of infection are greater in places with large cat populations and overcrowding, such as shelters. Prevalence rates can be as high as 45 percent.

This can be significant not only for the cat population, as some parasites have the potential to infect humans as well (zoonotic disease). One such common zoonotic disease is toxoplasmosis.

Some symptoms

- Vomiting
- Loss of appetite
- Diarrhea (might contain blood)
- The cat's coat may be in poor condition
- Anemia – The cat or kitten has pale gums
- The cat has a pot belly appearance – especially in kittens
- Worm segments around the anal area. These segments look like small grains of rice or sesame seeds
- The cat loses weight

Worms are easily cured with a few doses of medication, but if left untreated, they can cause serious health problems.

Feline Inflammatory Bowel Disease (Feline IBD)

[Feline Inflammatory Bowel Disease](#) (Feline IBD) is not a specific disease. It is a group of chronic gastrointestinal disorders. High on the list of symptoms for IBD are chronic vomiting and diarrhea.

In most cases Feline IBD can be controlled by medication and dietary management, but the disease is rarely cured.

Symptoms may include:

- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Weight loss
- Decreased appetite
- Abdominal pain
- Stomach rumbling
- Belching
- Black or odd-color stools
- Increased Flatulence
- Halitosis
- Increased thirst

In addition, vomiting and diarrhea can lead to dehydration. This can lead to other complications and symptoms as the cat's body functions break down. Anytime your cat loses water through vomiting or diarrhea, or your cat does not drink enough water, there is a potential serious health risk. Make sure that your cat has plenty of fresh clean water to drink and call your vet if you suspect that your cat may be dehydrated as this condition can be fatal.

Senior Cat Health Problems

As they age, cats, like humans, can develop signs and symptoms of age related disorders. And, like humans, cats are living longer. A number of physical and behavioral changes occur during the aging process. Many conditions that affect aging cats, while not correctable, can be controlled through diet, medications, or environmental changes.

Looking at the cat illness symptoms list with respect to senior cat health, aging cats can exhibit signs of any number of diseases that may or may not be related specifically to aging.

For example, as a cat ages, the immune system weakens, making the possibility of infections more common. We wouldn't necessarily associate an infection directly with aging, but perhaps an age related weakened immune system is to blame.

Some vets believe that making healthier cat food choices may help your cat to remain healthy longer. This is especially true if your cat suffers from or is at risk for any of these common elderly cat health problems.

Dehydration, skin conditions, overgrown and brittle claws, hearing loss, bad breath associated with dental disease, clouded eyes, inactivity, excessive meowing or howling, and an unusual demand for more attention can all be cat illness symptoms due to age related conditions.

In addition, impaired kidney function, loss of appetite, hyperthyroidism, high blood pressure, feline diabetes, and bowel conditions such as feline inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) are more common in older cats. There is also an increased risk of cancer as cats get older.

Work closely with your vet to understand which, if any, senior cat health problems your cat has or might experience in the future. Knowing which ailments your cat is most prone to will help you to identify signs and symptoms early.

You can then work with your vet to alter your pet's diet, your routine at home, or your cat's environment so that she can be as happy and healthy as possible.

Hairballs

Hairballs are a very common complaint because as cats groom themselves they swallow loose hair. Sometimes this hair forms into a ball and lodges in the cat's stomach.

Vomiting

There can many varied reasons why a cat vomits, from a serious illness to eating something disagreeable. An occasional, isolated episode of vomiting is usually normal.

Typical causes of vomiting are:

Intake of irritant or toxic substances

-Gastric disease

-Minor digestive upset

-Cat needs to eliminate a hair ball

-Travel sickness – caused by a disturbance of the balance organs in the inner ear

In case your cat or kitten is vomiting, food should not be given for about eight hours (except your cat is vomiting a hair ball – that's normal and there is nothing to worry about), but a small quantity of water can be given after two hours as long as this does not provoke more vomiting.

Continue to give water every hour until the cat is no longer thirsty. When feeding is resumed, offer a small quantity of a bland food at first and then gradually increase the quantity to the normal amount. If vomiting resumes, is persistent or is accompanied by other symptoms, take the cat to a vet.

Diarrhoea

Diarrhoea is not a disease in itself but rather a symptom that something is wrong with your cat or kitten's health. This could be a minor problem or could signify a more serious illness.

Typical symptoms for cat diarrhoea:

- Intestinal parasites and worms
- Bacterial or viral infection
- Medication: diarrhea can be caused as a side effect if your cat is treated for another illness.
- Eating the wrong kind of food or too much food.
- A sudden change in their diet

Diarrhea often doesn't last for more than 24 hours – if it does it is recommended to withhold all food for the next 24 hours. However, this only applies to adult cats. Don't do this with your kitten, because they may become hypoglycemic (dizzy and lethargic due to low blood sugar levels). Water should also be reduced to only small quantities every few hours.

Urinary Tract Infections

Urinary tract infections are another common health problem in cats. Bladder diseases occur in both male and female cats, although males have a higher risk of life-threatening blockage of the urethra.

Fleas

Fleas feed on your pet's blood and make your cat uncomfortable. A heavy infestation can cause it to become anaemic and unwell. Flea infestations have been known to kill kittens. Some individual animals are allergic to flea saliva and this causes the pet abject misery with constant scratching and self mutilation. The most common allergy dermatitis in cats and dogs is a flea allergy. Fleas also spread tapeworm from one animal to another.

Kidney Disease

- Constipation
- No appetite
- Lethargy
- Nausea
- Vomiting

When kidneys become worse, more water is needed to process toxins. By taking him in, your vet will give a blood and urine test to see if your cat is indeed having kidney failure. Though there is no known cure, there are some treatments that can be given to help prolong your cat's life. An i/v drip is one of the most common kinds of treatment. This helps filter out the toxins. Kidney failure is the most common cause of death in older cats. Often the first thing you notice with a cat suffering from feline kidney disease is that they have an increased thirst and drink more water.

Conjunctivitis

Many cats have chronic problems with conjunctivitis (inflammation of the eye membranes). Often, the problem comes and goes. The eyes may be red, swollen, watery and crusty.

Cat Flu

Cat flu is the general name given to a viral infection of the upper respiratory tract in cats. It is a common disease in cats and can make them very sick and miserable. It can be fatal in kittens and immunosuppressed older cats

Ear Mites

Ear mite infestations in cats can be extremely uncomfortable. Ear mites can also cause disfigurement and severe ear infections

Feline Stress

Cats are sensitive creatures and are prone to stress.

Common Stress Symptoms

- Spraying (even in neutered cats)
- Inappropriate elimination
- Pacing back and forth at perimeters of fences
- Loss of appetite
- Pulling out of fur
- Trembling
- Excessive meowing
- Hiding from the world, under beds, behind curtains etc
- Physical symptoms and illness – some illnesses and disorders (such as acne) have been associated with stress. Stress can also be a response to physical illness, so it is most important to check with your vet to rule out a medical condition

Feline Infectious Peritonitis (FIP)

FIP is caused by a mutation of the corona virus. According to some experts, cats living in multi-cat environments tend to test positive for enteric corona virus. Cats can live with that virus remaining quietly in the intestines with no sign of disease for their entire lifetime. In other cases, probably a genetic pre-disposition, the virus mutates into FIP.

Once a cat has contracted FIP, it will display symptoms of a mild upper respiratory infection: sneezing, watery eyes, and nasal discharge. It may also have diarrhoea, weight loss and lethargy. Most cats fully recover from this primary infection, although some may become virus carriers. A small percentage of exposed cats develop lethal FIP weeks or even years after the primary infection.

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus

FIV, or cat AIDS, is not always fatal. FIV decreases the ability of the cat's immune system to fight infections. Cats with FIV may remain free of symptoms for years. It is when the cat contracts other illnesses in the chronic stage of FIV infection that FIV is first suspected. This long list of illnesses includes oral-cavity infections, upper-respiratory infections, weight loss, ear infections, kidney disease, and many others. Although there is, as yet, no vaccine, all cats should be tested for the virus. The virus is transmitted through saliva, usually when a cat is bitten in a cat fight.

Feline Leukemia Virus

FLV was, until recently, the most common fatal disease of cats. But with a vaccine now available, the number of cases is dwindling. Although the name leukemia means cancer of the white blood cells, this is only 1 of the many diseases associated with this virus, such as other types of cancer, anemia, arthritis and respiratory infections. FLV is preventable if the cat is immunized before being exposed to the virus. Although the disease is not always immediately fatal, cats with FLV rarely have a long life expectancy. NEVER bring other cats into your household when you have a cat with FLV.

Lyme Disease

If your cat spends time outdoors, you should check him regularly for ticks. If you find a tick on your cat's body and he has been lethargic and acts as if he is in pain, ask your vet to test for Lyme Disease. This disease is transmitted to people and animals by deer ticks.

Some cats may show subtle symptoms while others may show none -- symptoms are hard to recognize and often may be confused with other illnesses or old age. Be observant of your pet's behavior. It is the only way to know if your pet has contracted Lyme disease if no tick was found. Some symptoms of Feline Lyme Disease include:

- (a) lethargy,
- (b) reluctance to jump or climb stairs,
- (c) limping, or reluctance to put weight on a paw,
- (d) loss of appetite.

The key to dealing with Feline Lyme Disease is prevention and early diagnosis and treatment.

Abscess from cat bites or scratches

Cats have extremely tough skin which does not easily tear. Consequently, teeth or claws do not leave large open wounds in the skin. Instead they puncture deep into the muscle tissue under the skin through relatively small holes that quickly heal over. The bacteria present on the tooth or claw are seeded in the tissue under the skin where they thrive in the warm moist environment. An abscess is extremely painful and can cause your cat to become very ill.

Toothache and Tooth Decay in Cats

The first symptom you may notice if your cat has toothache may be the cat's reluctance to eat. Any pressure on the tooth is extremely painful. The cat may be very hungry and will attempt to eat but drops the food when he gets it in his mouth.

A cat may reach a point where he no longer attempts to eat and he becomes thin and loses condition. He may also refuse to drink and become dehydrated.

Bad Breath in Cats

Although a cat's breath under normal circumstances is not the sweetest smell in the world you will certainly notice when it becomes foul smelling. Bad breath is usually an indicator that something is not right with your cat's health.

Feline Panleukopaenia

This can be fatal and is caused by a virus, and is also referred to as Feline Distemper. Kittens are at the highest risk. It is contagious, and is commonly spread through the use of a litter box, or by consuming contaminated food and water. You therefore need to be very careful if you have more than one cat in your home.

Signs to look for:

Lifeless and lethargic

Vomiting

Severe diarrhoea

Not eating or drinking

Dry skin from being dehydrated

Fur falling out

Vomiting, diarrhoea, fever, seizures and occasionally comas can occur.

If you have a suspicion that your cat may be infected, you should see your vet immediately. There are no specific drugs that will eliminate the virus but other forms of treatment may aid recovery, eg antibiotics.

When making a diagnosis, the white blood cell count is tested and the symptoms are noted to confirm that your cat has Feline Panleukopaenia.

This infection is very hard to fight, and many cats end up dying from it. There is good news though – a vaccine is now available to prevent your cat from becoming infected.

Upper Respiratory Infection

Like their human owners, cats too can catch colds. If you have an indoor cat that doesn't go outdoors, it is highly unlikely that he will get an upper respiratory infection (URI). This type of cat illness is contagious, and is spread by an infected cat coming in contact with another cat.

Symptoms to look for:

- Sneezing Cat
- Cough
- Runny Nose
- Fever
- Watery Eyes
- Raspy Meow

Some warning signs:

- Your cat won't eat or drink
- Your cat is lethargic

If your cat isn't eating or drinking, or is less active, this can be a sign that he is very ill. In this situation it's crucial to seek medical attention from a vet.

This type of cat infection is caused by a virus, so when taken to the vet they may give him antibiotics. The antibiotics are given to hold off the start of any other, bacterial, infections from forming.

There are some medications your vet can give that will help break up the mucus in your cat, which will help breathing easier for your pet.

In some severe cases, if your cat has become dangerously dehydrated, the vet will give him a fluid drip to try and tackle the symptoms of this cat illness.

Impetigo

Scabs and blisters that form on the skin; usually seen in kittens.

Keep the litter pan clean and dry. Treat the scabs and blisters with surgical soap and hydrogen peroxide. Occasionally, antibiotics are prescribed.

Feline Asthma

Chronic and persistent wheezing, coughing and noisy breathing; weight loss and inactivity; some animals exhibit abnormal posture. Oral steroids and/or cat inhalers

Normal life span if treated.

Cancer

Tumors on the surface of the skin, breast tissue lumps and abdominal lumps; vomiting, distended abdomen, diarrhea, weight loss and lethargy

Chemotherapy and/or surgery; various medications. Shortened life span; life-threatening if not treated

Vestibular Disease

Also known as dizzy kitty disease. Head tilts to the side, eyes move back and forth rapidly; animal has difficulty standing. May require hospitalization and sedation; fluids and antibiotics. Non-life threatening; with treatment, the symptoms usually subside within a few days to several weeks.

Hypoglycemia

Low energy and listless; occasional seizures or falling over and appearing comatose; most often seen in kittens. Feed syrup or honey; improved diet required.

Normal life span if treated; animals will respond somewhat quickly to the administration of sugar.

Peridontal Disease

Bad breath, bleeding gums, pawing at the mouth, drooling and loss of appetite. Animals will often be anaesthetised prior to teeth cleaning, root planing, surgery or tooth removal. Antibiotics and home brushing programs may be prescribed. Normal life span with proper tooth care

Upper Respiratory Disease - infectious

Runny nose and eyes; sneezing, fever and drooling; loss of appetite and depression. Treatment varies depending upon severity. Fluids may be given through an i/v drip. Normal life span if treated; potentially life-threatening; may be prevented with vaccination.

Ringworm

Hair loss; red and scaly skin, usually in a circular shaped area. Topical anti-fungal medication and/or lime sulphur dips. Normal life span if treated.

Alopecia

Hair loss and hair that won't grow back. Various medications depending upon condition. Normal life span if treated.

Scabies

Itching and hair loss, which usually starts at the back of the neck; will then spread to the face, stomach and legs; skin becomes thick, wrinkled and has yellow crusts. Sedation so the cat can be bathed; lime sulphur dip is then applied; process is repeated every week for 6-8 weeks. Normal life span if treated.

Feline Leukemia

Weight loss, fever, loss of appetite and weakness. Treatment varies. Good nutrition and antibiotics to treat secondary infections are usually required. Normal life span when following a preventative care program; Vaccines may be given to kittens to prevent the disease, although they aren't 100 percent effective.

Cat's normal temperature is 38.6°C or 101.5°F, sometimes slightly higher. Anything above 39.2°C or 102.5°F is fever

A kitten should be vaccinated around nine weeks of age, with the important second dose being given a few weeks later.

A booster vaccination one year on is important to enhance the initial level of immunity. Regular boosters throughout a cat's life will help maintain a good level of protection against the core diseases of cat 'flu, feline panleukopaemia and feline leukemia. Your vet can advise you on the frequency of these boosters.

Microchipping is an excellent method of permanently identifying your cat. The chip is slightly smaller than a grain of rice and is inserted under the cat's skin between the shoulder blades without a sedation or anaesthetic.

SIGNS OF A HEALTHY CAT

Appetite and Condition

A healthy cat should always have a good appetite. Loss of appetite may be the first sign of a major illness, however, from time to time well-fed cats may refuse to eat. There can be many reasons, such as a change of ownership, or a change of location.

Female cats may refuse to eat just prior to kitting, or just after. However, it could simply be that your cat is being fed elsewhere. Regularly weighing your cat is a good way to monitor if your cat is under or over eating.

If none of these reasons apply, and the cat does not eat at all for more than 24 hours, or its appetite declines over a period of 2-3 days, visit your local vet.

From time to time cats will eat certain types of grass. It is not clear why cats eat grass but there are a couple of possible reasons. Firstly, it acts as a good source of roughage, and secondly it induces vomiting if the cat's stomach is overfull, or to remove a blockage.

Grass does not seem to harm cats as long as it has not been sprayed with toxic chemicals. However, if grass eating is accompanied by prolonged and continuous vomiting visit your local vet.

It is useful to note how much your cat normally drinks, therefore it is easier to spot changes. There are common reasons for increased drinking such as hot weather, eating salty foods, or a cat that has just had kittens. Increased drinking not related to any of these circumstances needs to be checked out by your local vet.

Kittens show considerable abdominal distention after eating and this is quite normal. However, if a kitten is thin at the shoulders and hindquarters, with a poor coat, in addition to the abdominal distention, it could be suffering from a worm infestation. Other causes of a pot-bellied appearance could include pregnancy, fluid accumulation or infectious peritonitis.

Breath

Bad breath is often caused by a build up of tartar on your cat's teeth and is particularly common in older cats. Cats should have their teeth brushed once a week for the first 3 years of their life, gradually increasing to 3 times a week as they get older.

Cat toothbrushes, which are specifically designed for the cat's mouth. Finger brushes or dental chews may be a more suitable alternative if your cat is nervous or difficult.

Ears

Cats ears should always be clean and have no evidence of smell or accumulation of wax. Abnormal discharge, smell, soreness or irritation may be an indication of infection.

If your pet constantly shakes his head or scratches his ears he may have an ear infection, mites or a grass seed problem in his ear and you should take him to the vets for diagnosis. Ear mite infections commonly occur in puppies and kittens and will cause a build-up of black wax in their ears. If you look carefully, you may be able to see the tiny mites. Mites can be treated with ear mite drops.

Eyes

Cats eyes should be bright and clear. There should be no evidence of abnormal discharge or soreness surrounding the eyes. Some breeds such as Persians, naturally have a clear discharge secreting from their eyes. In other cats any cases of an unusual persistent clear discharge should be examined by a vet. Cloudy discharges may indicate an infection, therefore it is important to keep your cat isolated indoors to prevent cross-infection. In any cases of runny eyes, where pain is also present, the cat should be examined by your vet, whatever the appearance of the discharge.

Coat and Skin

A healthy cat should have a nice shiny coat with no signs of bare patches or skin blemishes. It is a good idea to groom your cat regularly, not only does this remove any shedding hair, you can check your cat over thoroughly and observe any potential problems.

Cats will normally scratch because they itch, however, continuous scratching needs to be stopped. Two of the main causes are ear mites or fleas. These can be easily found and treated; however, buying a treatment from your vet is generally more effective.

Nose

The cat's nose should be free of discharge and should be damp to touch. Most healthy cats have a wet nose, though a dry nose is not necessarily a sign that your cat is unwell. If the cat's nose remains dry, and is accompanied by other signs of ill health, get it checked out by your vet.

Mouth

When looking inside the mouth there should be no signs of soreness, teeth should be clean and gums should be pale pink.

Cat drool as a normal response to the anticipation of food or when frightened. However, this can also be due to a sore mouth caused by an ulcer or a foreign body.

Hypersalivation can be a sign of poisoning or nausea, for example in cases of travel sickness. If the cat is showing unexplained hypersalivation, particularly if it is also unwell, you should get this checked by your vet.

Faeces

The normal motion for a cat should be firm, however, like all other creatures consistency and quantity may vary from time to time. Colour and consistency vary with the type of food eaten, occasionally slight streaks of blood found on the outside of the stool are likely to have come from a small broken blood vessel around the anus, and are unimportant provided that the cat is otherwise well. If blood is seen regularly, or there is a large amount present, this needs to be checked by your vet.

Urine

Over 30% of domestic cats can be prone to Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD), this disease can be caused by a variety of things. Cats will show different signs of FLUTD as a number of conditions can fall into this disease, ranging from blood in the urine, straining to urinate and when they do only passing small amounts. This can be painful and very uncomfortable for your cat. If problems persist you should seek veterinary advice immediately.

Body Temperature

A cat's body temperature should be between 38-39.2 °C. A raised temperature is often an indication of infection. A normal temperature does not necessarily mean your cat is not ill.

Hairballs

Cats are fastidious self-groomers, regularly licking their fur. Generally more common in long haired cats, but can occur in short haired breeds, Hairballs can be quite dangerous if they are not treated. The hair that they swallow can cause blockages in their stomachs or intestines, resulting in vomiting or constipation. The occasional dose of hairball remedy or other laxative will help reduce the amount of hair there is to be swallowed.

For a full list of cat diseases visit <http://www.petmd.com/cat/conditions> for a full A-Z guide.

<http://www.cat-lovers-only.com/cat-illness-symptoms.html>

<http://www.catsofaustralia.com/cat-health-problems.htm>

<http://www.healthycatscare.com/cat-illnesses.html>

http://cats.lovetoknow.com/List_of_Cat_Diseases_and_Symptoms

<http://www.cat-illnesses.org/>

<http://www.petmd.com/cat/conditions>

<http://www.cats.org.uk/cat-care/cat-glossary/>