

Has your cat taken up the drink????

The incidence of cat diabetes is on the increase, with a recent UK survey suggesting that nearly 1 in 200 cats are diabetic. Although often thought of as a disease of older age, diabetes in cats actually occurs most commonly in the 'mature' life stage – that is, in cats aged 7–10 years. The disease is normally diagnosed using blood and urine tests. Many cats will need lifelong insulin injections to treat their diabetes. However, when diabetes is detected early in the course of the disease, and optimal treatment (ie, twice-daily insulin injections) is started promptly, with close monitoring, then in up to 50–60% of cats, the need for insulin may actually resolve, often within the first few months of treatment. So being extra vigilant early on can really pay off.

In diabetic cats, the high blood sugar is so severe that glucose is excreted in the urine. Glucose takes water with it so an increased volume of urine is produced. To compensate for this, and so that dehydration is prevented, the cat develops an increased thirst. Weight loss and a voracious appetite are also frequently seen and these may be the original reasons for presentation to a veterinary surgeon. Therefore the main clinical signs seen in a diabetic cat are:



- Weight loss
- large appetite
- excessive thirst

These signs are not always present or may pass unnoticed. For example, the increased thirst may not be recognised if the cat is drinking from water sources outdoors while not

noted to be drinking more in the home.

Other clinical signs which may be seen in diabetic cats include:

- Straining to pass urine and/or passing bloody urine associated with a bacterial urinary tract infection
- Enlargement of the liver evident on examination by a veterinary surgeon
- Poor coat

Did you know?

- Obesity is a common cause of diabetes, so preventing obesity can prevent diabetes in some cats
- Early in the course of the disease you may not notice anything is wrong with your cat. Routine health checks at your veterinary surgery, including urine checks, can help pick up early signs of diabetes
- If diabetic cats are treated and monitored intensively early on, as many as 50–60% of them may recover (ie, their diabetes will be transient, meaning they won't necessarily need insulin for the rest of their lives). Unfortunately, it is not possible to predict which cats will fall into this category – other cats will require lifelong treatment.

If your cat is diagnosed with diabetes, your vet or veterinary nurse will first want to ensure that you fully understand what the disease is, and what the implications are of having a diabetic cat. Any additional concerns that need to be addressed in order to successfully treat the diabetes in your cat (eg, obesity) will be discussed.

It will also be explained to you how to store insulin, how to draw up an accurate dose and how to give the injection. You will find out what to monitor your cat for – in particular, signs of an insulin overdose. You may be asked to collect some urine samples from your cat (and advised how to do this!), and, if necessary, given advice on what diet to feed, how much food to give and when to give it.

If you are worried about diabetes in your cat then make an appointment with your Veterinary Surgeon now.

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