

Cat Constipation Prevention and Possible Complications

1. Increase your cat's water intake. The quickest and easiest way to accomplish this is to replace all dry food with wet food. Many cats are not enthusiastic water drinkers and rely on the moisture from food to balance their system.
2. Provide palatable water. Even water-loving cats won't touch a bowl of water that is dirty or old. Clean and refill your cat's water dish frequently.
3. Trick them into drinking more water. Many cats like the "mischief" of drinking from human water glasses. Place a few wide-mouthed drinking cups, filled with water, around the house.
4. Try feeding your cat canned food which has a high water content, or add it to the dry food. Use dry food which has increased fiber [example: Hill's Science Diets w/d] and / or fatty acids.
5. Comb cat to avoid hair ball constipation. Give the cat hair ball treatment such as Laxatone® if signs of hair noted in the stools.

Complications of Cat Constipation

If left untreated, constipation can develop into some very serious conditions. Without proper care, these conditions can result in severe sickness and death.

1. Obstipation

Obstipation refers to a severe case of constipation in which the blockage is so advanced that neither stools or gas are allowed to pass through the intestines. This is also called "intractable constipation", and often needs veterinary treatment.

2. Megacolon

This is an advanced stage of constipation that occurs when the colon becomes abnormally dilated. The stools congeal into hard, dry masses inside the distended intestine, preventing any passage of materials.

Since it is almost always impossible for a cat to pass these excessively large fecal balls, surgery is often required. Complications from surgery can arise, since it is difficult to properly heal the gut walls after incision. Recovery in a post-megacolon surgery can be lengthy, expensive, and painful.

Home Treatments for CONSTIPATION IN CATS

1. Give a hairball treatment such as Laxatone® 3 cc [approximately 3 inches] 1 - 2 x daily until bowel movements are seen. Then give a dose 1 - 2 times per week.
2. Give your cat 1/2 tsp. of plain petroleum jelly daily, either as a treat or mixed well into its wet food. Petroleum jelly's large inert molecules cannot be digested like other vegetable or animal-based oils, and help lubricate the intestine.

3. Other additives are wheat bran (1 tablespoon per day) or psyllium [Metamucil or Benefiber] ½ to 1 teaspoon per day in a meat based broth mixed with the food.
4. Wet Food and High Fiber Diet
If your cat is constipated, you should try to switch to wet food. Light tuna flakes with abundant oil can be a beneficial laxative to treat feline constipation. The diet should also be rich in fibers. You may opt for fiber supplements for a successful treatment.
5. Vegetable oil or olive oil stimulate bowel movements and can be a natural cat constipation treatment. The constipation occurs when feces are not passed for too long and the bowel absorbs the moisture of the feces, causing these to be dry and difficult to pass. The vegetable oil softens the stool and lubricates the colon. Administrate 5 to 10 drops of vegetable oil to your cat's food daily until normal bowel movements are noted.
6. Certain foods act as natural laxatives.

Canned Pumpkin: 1 teaspoon, 2x per day

Grape Nut Flakes: 1 to 3 teaspoons, several times per day

7. Several products that are sold in the drugstore might help. These include:

Mineral Oil: 1 teaspoon per 10 pounds of body weight mixed in food

White Petrolatum : 1 teaspoon

Docusate Sodium: 50 to 100 mg orally

They should only be needed for 1 to 2 days and must be done under the direction of your veterinarian.

8. Under normal circumstances, milk causes pets to develop diarrhea, but if your cat is suffering constipation, it is suggested to give liquid dairy to your feline two times per day. Offer 1/8 - 1/4 cup of milk in the morning and in the evening. Discontinue its use once the problem is solved.
9. Environmental changes may also help. For instance, a dirty litter box can cause cats to avoid the box and hold stool in. Something as simple as keeping the box clean may solve the problem. Stress can also cause constipation. Stressors may include a new person or pet in the household, etc.

Veterinary Treatments

There are prescription medications that are specifically designed to treat constipation in cats. However, in more severe cases (such as obstipation, which is constipation

that is resistant to all forms of control), additional medical care will be required.

If your cat's constipation is persistent, we may recommend a work up including blood analysis and urinalysis (tests to check the health of the kidneys). In very severe cases, hospitalization and possible surgery may be necessary. Constipation can become a very serious problem for your cat, so it is extremely important to catch it as early as possible.