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Encouraging Your Cat to Drink

Having an adequate water intake is important to maintain your cat's hydration. This is especially important for cats with certain diseases. With renal insufficiency, keeping your cat well hydrated helps flush toxins through the kidneys. When your cat is well hydrated with lower urinary tract disease, it reduces crystal formation and the buildup of crystals in the bladder. And if your cat has a urinary tract infection, being well hydrated helps flush bacteria out of the urinary tract.

Ways to encourage your cat to drink:

Place multiple bowls throughout the house. This provides more opportunities for a cat to drink, and some cats prefer to drink at particular locations in the house.

Many cats have preferences for different types of bowls. Plastic can make the water taste funny.

Many cats like to drink out of coffee mugs.

Change the water bowls frequently (once to twice daily).

Wash water bowls frequently since a bacterial film can develop in one day. Washing the bowl once daily with dish soap, or in the dishwasher, is best. Do not use a household cleaner.

Try bottled or filtered water to see if your cat prefers the taste. Use bottled drinking water, not distilled water.

Flavor the water with tuna juice. This water will need to be changed more frequently, after an hour or two (more frequently in warm weather), and replaced with fresh, plain water in a new bowl. Always have a bowl of regular water available when you have flavored water out.

Float a few pieces of kibble in the water. As with all flavored water, it should be changed frequently, and plain water should be available at all times.

Leave a tap dripping. Some cats only like running water.

Get a water fountain, also known as a circulating water dish. This is great for cats who like running water, and for people who don't like dripping faucets. Be sure to use a water fountain made for pets, not a decorative fountain with rocks. The water fountain bowls also need to be cleaned daily.

Feed canned food. You can add a little water to your cat's wet food. This doesn't encourage your cat to drink, but since canned food is 75% water, it does increase moisture intake. Wet food should be removed after one hour to prevent your cat from eating spoiled food.