



Feline Idiopathic Cystitis

Feline idiopathic cystitis (FIC) is a condition in which cats exhibit signs of cystitis such as increased frequency of urination, straining to urinate and blood in the urine, without any obvious underlying cause. Less common causes of cystitis in cats include bacterial infection, stones and tumors. These will need to be ruled out with some tests, before a diagnosis of FIC can be made.

What causes FIC?

We do not fully understand what causes FIC (that's what idiopathic means), however, there are a number of abnormalities that are common in cats with FIC and contribute to the disease.

1. Defective Bladder Lining.
2. Inflammation of the nerves of the bladder wall.
3. Stress. This can be an obvious trigger, such as a change in the household members, conflict with neighborhood cats, owner stress, building works etc or something more subtle. Cats kept solely indoors and those sharing their environment with one or more other cats are typical examples of where stress can occur, even if no obvious outward signs are present.
4. Abnormal response to stress.
5. Cats that are overweight / sedentary are more likely to develop FIC.

Management

Drugs can be part of the management of this condition, but unfortunately there is no drug that will cure your cat in the long term. Changes in environment and feeding as described below are essential to minimise the chance or recurrent episodes of FIC.



Encourage your cat to drink more and urinate more frequently;

- Feed wet food, ideally prescription urinary food
- Weight loss where applicable
- Multiple water bowls around the house
- Use ceramic bowls rather than plastic or metal that can taint water
- Place water bowls in quiet areas, away from litter trays and food bowls
- Cat water fountain, leave a little water in the sink / bath
- Flavour water with tuna / chicken
- At least one litter box in the house for each cat
- Experiment with different types of boxes and litter

Reducing stress caused by other cats in the neighbourhood:

- Microchip cat flap to ensure only your cat can get into the house
- Wash the outside of the flap where other cats often spray
- Apply sticky back frosting to windows so that outside cats can't peer in

The single most common cause of stress in cases of FIC is conflict with another cat in the household. This may be very difficult to detect, but should always be suspected in a cat with FIC where there are other cats in the same house.



These are some steps you can take to reduce this kind of stress;

- Make sure cats do not have to compete for resources such as food, litter trays, toys water, sleeping places etc by providing plenty of these around the house.
- Ensure cats don't have to 'run the gauntlet' across open spaces to get to food, litter trays etc
- Consider feeding separately at set mealtimes rather than leaving food down all the time
- Provide access to 'bolt holes' where there's only space for 1 -top of the wardrobe or a single bed cat perch
- Although difficult, in some cases rehoming the cat with FIC to a single cat household should be seriously considered, as this may dramatically improve the situation.

Cats that spend a large amount of time indoors are also susceptible to stress due to boredom.

Simple measures may help to relieve this, such as:

- Spending time playing with the cat on a regular basis – setting aside time each day and using new and different toys
- Allowing the cat some outdoor access, even in an enclosed run, if necessary, can provide interest and stimulation
- Modify the environment so that there is plenty of interest for the cat (scratching posts, etc) and resting places for the cat. Cats need space and need to be able to control their environment, at least to some extent. It is important that they can explore their environment and have hiding places – ideally in elevated locations (eg, on top of furniture or cupboards).
- Using Feliway, either as a spray on bedding and furniture and/or as a plug-in diffuser to help reduce stress and anxiety.

Further information for owners can be found at the international cat care website:
www.icatcare.org

