



## Feline Interstitial/Sterile Cystitis

Cystitis refers to *inflammation* (and not necessarily infection) of the bladder and urinary tract leading to frequent, painful voiding of small amounts of urine. You may see your cat frequently visiting the litter box and squatting to urinate without producing much - or any – urine. If the inflammation is severe enough, you may sometimes see blood in the urine. Many cats with cystitis associate the pain of urination with the litter box they are currently using and they may begin urinating elsewhere in the house, hoping to avoid the pain.

There is no one specific cause for cystitis, but it has frequently been linked to stress and highly concentrated urine. Cats do not naturally have a high thirst drive and need to get much of their water intake from their diet. Increased water intake helps dilute urine. Therefore, cats being fed a dry diet take in less water, have more concentrated urine and are more likely to develop recurring episodes of cystitis. For this reason I highly recommend switching your cat to a canned diet. You should look for a diet that is less than 7% carbohydrates. Fortunately, the best diets for our cats are easy to find and are fairly inexpensive. The two brands with the most flavor options are Friskies and Nine Lives. I recommend you visit [binkyspage.tripod.com](http://binkyspage.tripod.com) for a complete nutritional list of appropriate canned diets.

Contrary to popular belief, 99% of cystitis cases in otherwise healthy cats are NOT due to infection but are instead caused by inflammation. Thus, in most cases, antibiotics will NOT cure your cat. Once an infection has been ruled out, pain medications are vital in keeping your cat comfortable and controlling his/her symptoms.

Management then becomes essential to keep your cat from having recurring episodes of cystitis. As mentioned before, increasing your cat's water intake will go a long way in ensuring proper urinary tract health. Switch to a

canned diet. Use a water fountain. Add variety by freezing tuna juice or chicken/beef broth in ice cube trays and offering these ice cubes as treats.

Decreasing stress will also keep your cat healthy. Keep your cat fit and trim. Make sure he/she is not overweight, as this will increase his/her likelihood of other health issues. The canned diets mentioned above will go a long way in helping your cat lose weight. If your cat is indoors, make sure he/she has enough stimulation and isn't bored. Make sure you have enough litter boxes and that they are cleaned regularly. You should always have one more litter box than you do cats. So, if you have three cats using the litter boxes, you should have four boxes available for them. Clean litter boxes daily. Use clumping litter and do not frequently switch types of litter. When you find one your cat likes, stick with it. Adding new pets, going on vacation, moving and other life-changing events are a huge source of stress for your cat, so try to minimize these as best as you can. The more stress your cat feels, the more likely cystitis is to recur.

Despite good management, some cats will unfortunately suffer from recurrent episodes of cystitis. For these patients we recommend adding additional medications that help reduce urinary tract inflammation. These medications come in injections, pills and/or flavored treats, so please call us if you think your cat would benefit from further treatment or if you have any questions or concerns.

For more information regarding feline health issues, I encourage you to visit **[catinfo.org](http://catinfo.org)**.