



Lower Urinary Disorder in Cats

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Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disorder, also known as Feline Urinary Syndrome, or interstitial cystitis, is a relatively common problem in felines. Cats with this condition have special management needs that should be addressed as soon as the disorder is diagnosed, and *continued for life*. **The most common cause of relapses is discontinued home care.**

Diet

Your cat may be prescribed a special food and should begin eating it as soon as possible. Take a couple days to transition from his/her previous food to the new diet, and then feed the new food EXCLUSIVELY. The prescription diets have carefully controlled mineral levels and effects on the pH of urine which prevent crystals from forming. Canned food is preferred over dry. Commercial diets are not acceptable for cats with this condition.

The following diets are acceptable for most cats with this condition: **Purina UR** and **Hill's Science Diet C/D**. Some cats may do better on Hill's Science Diet S/D, W/D, or Royal Canin SO, but these diets should not be used unless specifically recommended.

Water Intake

Cats are desert animals, and naturally produce highly concentrated urine. This allows crystals in the urine, along with any proteins present, to clump together easily, which may lead to urethral obstruction. Increasing water intake can help dilute the urine and reduce this risk. Every cat has favorite type(s) of water; try offering:

- Cat water fountains (available at pet stores and online) or a dripping tap
- Water in a tall glass or on an elevated surface (so the cat can see what is going on while drinking)
- Day old water (this allows chlorine to evaporate and changes the taste)
- Water at a variety of temperatures (try adding an ice cube to the bowl a few times a day)
- Tuna water (drain the water from one can of low sodium tuna fish into one or two ice cube trays, then fill the rest of the way with water and freeze; put ice cubes in a freezer bag and drop one in the bowl every day to create flavored water)

Reduce Stress

Stress is an important component of this disease—cats under stress from any source will shed protein through their urine, which acts like a glue to bind together the crystals into dangerous plugs. Ways to minimize stress include:

- Providing good hiding places at a variety of levels (cat trees, boxes, access to 'safe spaces'), especially if there are other pets or small children from whom your cat may want occasional breaks
- Providing separate food, water, and litter box locations for each cat in the house, in each of their territories (watch carefully—cats often have complex rules on who goes where and when!)
- Scooping litter boxes once a day, completely emptying and cleaning them once weekly
- Using pheromone diffusers and sprays (available here, online, and in pet stores) to create a 'calm, happy cat' mood in your cat's favorite areas; these can be especially helpful during periods of unavoidable stress when your cat's routine is disrupted
- Starting stress-relieving medications if recommended (there are a variety ranging from natural supplements to prescription anti-anxiety medications)