



THIS JUST IN

New Blood-Pressure Med

Hypertension can damage a cat's internal organs

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved Boehringer Ingelheim Vetmedica Inc.'s Semintra, the first FDA-approved drug to control systemic hypertension (high blood pressure) in cats. The drug has been available in Europe since 2013.

Systemic hypertension occurs most commonly in cats with chronic kidney disease but can also develop with other chronic diseases or with no identifiable cause. Untreated high blood pressure can damage the cat's eyes, kidneys, heart, and/or brain.

The active ingredient in Semintra is telmisartan, which is an angiotensin II receptor blocker that reduces blood pressure by relaxing blood vessels.

Semintra is administered orally or placed on top of the cat's food. The cat's blood pressure must be checked, with dosages adjusted when needed.

All cats taking Semintra should be monitored closely for signs of

anemia, changes in appetite, vomiting, diarrhea, or weight loss. ■



Tchurak / Depositphotos

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An Itch You Just Have to Scratch

Your cat is constantly itchy and starting to lose hair. What's going on?

Skin problems are frustrating for cat owners. Itchiness and discomfort, with symptoms ranging from constant scratching to irritated skin to hair loss, can be caused by a wide variety of conditions. This makes diagnosis challenging and sometimes expensive. We consulted William Miller, VMD, DACVD, Dermatology Section Chief at Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine for insight on the things that can make your cat's skin crawl.

Parasites

"The number one cause for itching and its associated hair loss (fur mowing if the cat is an over groomer) is flea-related, if the cat lives in a flea-infested area and adequate flea control isn't used," says Dr. Miller. Flea-allergy dermatitis is an allergic reaction to flea bites. Affected cats can have severe reactions even with only a few bites. The classic presentation is the presence of red, irritated skin with crusty bumps around the cat's rear end and/or on her abdomen and neck (these are the most popular spots for fleas to



With itching, a cat may lick her hair away, leaving red, irritated skin.

feed). The cat may also have scratch wounds from scratching at the lesions with her claws.

Flea-allergy dermatitis is generally diagnosed by the clinical signs. However, as even a single flea could cause the cat to have a reaction, finding a flea is not required. Treating flea-allergy dermatitis requires diligent flea control for all pets in the household year-round and ideally keeping the affected cat indoors to minimize flea exposure. Your veterinarian may also prescribe medications to minimize the severity of the symptoms or promote healing of damaged skin, but keeping fleas away from your cat is vital.

And fleas aren't the only bug that might be bothering your cat. "In certain parts of the country (mostly down south), infection with the contagious *Demodex gato* mite is a reasonably frequent cause for itching," says Dr. Miller. "[Another] typically southern external parasite would be feline scabies (*Notoedres cati*) or the fur mite."

Mites can be found by doing a skin scrape, or dragging a scalpel blade sideways across the cat's skin to dislodge skin cells and the mites living there. The skin scraping is then examined

Itchy-Cat Clues

- ➔ Constant scratching
- ➔ Biting and chewing at skin
- ➔ Excessive licking
- ➔ Stained fur due to licking
- ➔ Red, irritated skin
- ➔ Crusty lesions on the skin

Possible New Epilepsy Control Option

Once-a-day levetiracetam may become an option

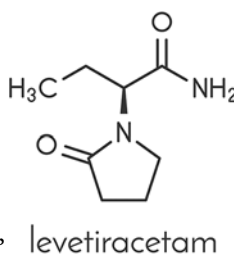
Luckily, cats do not experience the high frequency of seizures that can plague many dogs, but seizing cats face the extra challenge of trying to find a safe, effective medication. A recent study looked at an extended-release version of the medication levetiracetam.

"Many anti-epileptic drugs have limited utility in cats either due to their intolerable side effects (such as potassium bromide), their short half-lives (such as phenytoin), lack of efficacy as a sole agent (gabapentin, pregabalin), or the fact they are not widely available in many countries (zonesamide, imeptoin). As such, phenobarbital has remained the mainstay of seizure control in many cats, with levetiracetam a commonly used alternative. Both of these drugs require two to three doses to be given per day, which may be untenable for many cat owners," says the Winn Feline Foundation.

Volunteers for the study were nine pet cats, all over 10 lbs. in body weight. Size was important since the only version of extended-release levetiracetam currently available is a 500 mg dose. Owners gave one pill each day and tracked appetite, behavior, and any adverse events. The study went smoothly, with only minor problems noted, including some vomiting by one cat and mild sedation and ataxia briefly by two others. Serum levels were well above those needed to control seizures.

Obviously, this study is a preliminary step toward the use of extended-release levetiracetam for seizure control in cats. Sample size was small, and the cats were healthy and of a set size. Also, seizure medications are given for longer periods of time than in this study. Still, it is a first step, and in the future cat owners with difficult-to-pill cats may find this to be an acceptable alternative. ■

Barnes Heller H, Granick M, Van Hesteren M, Boothe DM. Serum levetiracetam concentrations and adverse events after multiple dose extended release levetiracetam administration to healthy cats. *J Vet Intern Med.* 2018 Apr 19. doi: 10.1111/jvim.15129.



Play Biting Is Not Fun

A rough cat can get out of control quickly

It's cute, at first, when that tiny little kitten leaps at your ankles, swats you a few times, then runs off. But as he grows, this play biting/scratching can injure you.

"Many of these play behaviors mimic predatory behavior, and kittens who have a strong prey drive often engage in more vigorous play, which can develop into play-related aggression," says Pamela Perry, DVM, Ph.D., a lecturer in animal behavior at Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine. But there are ways to teach your cat that this type of rough play cannot be tolerated:

- ▶ **Cease direct hand play.** Using your hands may reinforce biting and swatting.
- ▶ **Watch for signs of an impending attack.** Tail lashing, ear flicking, tensing muscles, dilated pupils, and hissing are all warnings that your cat is feeling aggressive. Move away from your cat, out of reach.
- ▶ **Have a favorite cat toy ready.** Surprise attacks can be averted if you grab his attention by tossing a toy or dragging some yarn for him to play with.
- ▶ **Redirect his energy.** Use food-dispensing toys, kitty condos, cat trees—even a cardboard box—to let your cat scratch and tear into things just for fun.
- ▶ **Never physically punish your cat.** Punishment can trigger retaliation with stronger play or more vigorous defensive aggression. Simply stop playing.
- ▶ **Get him or her a friend.** Sometimes, a cat of similar age and temperament may give your cat an appropriate outlet. "This is one of the few times getting another cat may help," Dr. Perry says. If these tips don't work, consider a consultation with a veterinary behaviorist. Go to the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists (dacv.org) to find one in your area. ■



CatWatch

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**Send Ask Elizabeth questions
and letters to the editor:**

CatWatch*
535 Connecticut Ave.
Norwalk, CT 06854-1713
catwatcheditor@cornell.edu

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or write to: CatWatch, P.O. Box 8535,
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Skin continued from p. 1

under a microscope. Even if mites are not found in one skin scraping, your cat may still have a mite infection, so your veterinarian will consider all clinical signs and not depend solely on the skin scraping to make a diagnosis.

Ringworm is a fungal skin infection. Ringworm usually presents as circular areas of hair loss that may also be itchy. It is generally treated by applying topical antifungal medications to the affected areas. Oral medications are often used as well. Treatment can take six weeks or more. Note that ringworm can be spread to humans. If you are suspicious that your cat has ringworm, seek veterinary attention promptly and avoid touching the affected areas on your cat.

Environmental Allergies

“When external parasites are off the list, atopy or food allergy come next,” says Dr. Miller. Atopy refers to environmental allergies, such as to pollens, ragweed, or dust. Symptoms include itching and scratching, biting at skin, lesions, ulcers, and hair loss, and the cat may also show signs of ear and/or respiratory infections. Symptoms can be seasonal, as with allergies experienced by many humans, or may be present year-round. Dr. Miller also warns that some cats “start out with [a] mild seasonal itch that eventually becomes year-round and the level of the itching increases dramatically.”

Diagnosing atopy can be frustrating. Allergy testing can be done by testing the skin or serum from your cat’s blood. These results can then be used to formulate an immunotherapy solution containing the antigens that your cat responds to. Immunotherapy is tailored to your individual cat’s needs but can take several months to yield relief.

A skin biopsy can also be useful to make a diagnosis, as can testing if the cat responds to steroids and/or antihistamines. These medications can be used as treatment, either in conjunction with immunotherapy or on their own.

Food Allergies

Food allergies are an immune response to a particular ingredient in the food. The most frequent offenders are protein sources, such as chicken. The most definitive way to diagnose a food allergy is to adhere to a strict food trial by completely removing the suspect ingredient from your cat’s diet

for several weeks and then reintroducing it. If that ingredient was the problem, your cat’s symptoms will go away during the trial period without the suspect ingredient and return when the ingredient is added back in.

Food trials are difficult because they require monitoring not only the cat’s main diet, but all treats and table scraps she might get. There is no guarantee that the first ingredient removed is the actual culprit, so it may take several trials to get an answer.

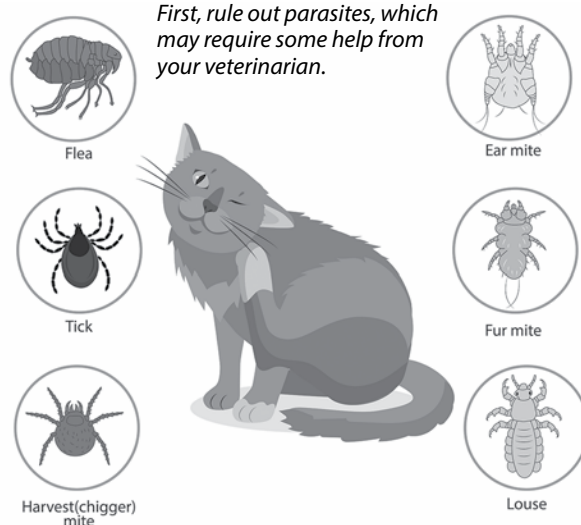
The good news, however, is that as long as the problem ingredient is avoided, your cat will be comfortable and healthy.

Behavioral Over-Grooming

Dr. Miller says, “Although people talk of behavioral over grooming, it is actually very rare to nonexistent in the otherwise sane cat. If the cat has separation anxiety, litter-box issues, etc., then over grooming might enter the picture.” These cats may have hair loss due to their excessive grooming habits, but generally lack the other signs of skin problems.

Seeking Treatment

“The owner should always give their primary-care veterinarian several shots at diagnosing and treating the condition,” says Dr. Miller. Many different skin problems manifest with the same clinical signs, so it can take some experimenting to figure out what is actually causing



the problem. “If the same treatment is used over and over again and it’s not effective enough, it’s time to seek a second opinion.” If available, a board-certified veterinary dermatologist can be a valuable resource for owners of cats with chronic skin problems.

Don’t be tempted by home remedies that claim they will resolve itching. “Few, if any, home remedies that are safe for [cats] do much to control itching,” warns Dr. Miller. “The veterinarian is the best person to help the cat.”

Prevention

Good parasite control is the first step toward keeping your cat’s skin healthy. Keeping your cat indoors limits exposure to parasites, but indoor-only cats can still get fleas (see “Yes, Your Indoor Cat Can Get Fleas,” June 2018, at catwatchnewsletter.com). Normal grooming also helps to keep your cat’s coat and skin healthy. Keep her thin and fit to allow for adequate grooming. ■

Common Treatments for Environmental Allergies

- ▶ Steroids, such as prednisone, which are potent anti-inflammatory drugs with a range of side effects
- ▶ Antihistamines
- ▶ Cyclosporine, an immunosuppressant
- ▶ Omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids, supplements that replenish essential oils in the skin and decrease inflammatory molecules

Diagnostics

- ▶ Skin scraping to look for mites
- ▶ Using a flea comb to check for fleas
- ▶ Blood tests for allergies
- ▶ Food trial for food allergies
- ▶ Intradermal allergy testing
- ▶ Skin biopsy
- ▶ Trial run with a steroid or antihistamine to see if it helps

Managing the Mess

With true incontinence, your cat is unaware

A beloved family cat who becomes incontinent can raise the household stress level immeasurably. After years of dutifully using the litter box, your cat seems to go wherever she is. The truth of the matter is that she's not happy about it either.

Incontinence includes both bladder and bowel problems. True incontinence means that your cat is unaware of the fact that she is urinating or defecating or is incapable of stopping the action when it is inappropriate. So, while diarrhea and urine marking may seem like incontinence, in most of those cases your cat is aware of what is happening.

True incontinence can have neurologic causes:

- ▶ Cats with tail deformities and some Manx cats may lack nerves that control the urinary and bowel sphincters.
- ▶ Sphincter nerves can be damaged by trauma.
- ▶ Tail injuries usually include some nerve damage, which may be temporary or permanent.
- ▶ A chronically full bladder can become stretched and lose some nerve tone, leading to accidents.

DID YOU KNOW?

Manx Cat Genetics

The Manx gene is an incomplete dominant

While Manx cats are known for short tails, they carry at least one copy of the gene for a normal tail. The Manx gene is an incomplete dominant, so even kittens that inherit the short-tail gene can show varying tail lengths. In one litter, you could have kittens with a range from a full tail to virtually no tail. ■



Severe diarrhea can make it impossible for a cat to get to the litter box in time.

Narrow Down the Reasons

There are other reasons cats can lose control, too. A kitten with severe diarrhea may be truly unable to get to the litter box in time. Very pregnant queens may also have problems with urination and defecation due to the full uterus pushing on the bladder or bowels.

At the other end of life, some senior cats may become senile and lose control of bladder or bowels. Families often tell veterinarians their cat gets up from a nap and leaves behind some stool or a puddle of urine. This problem may be helped by providing plenty of easy-access litter boxes throughout the house, so your cat has frequent reminders and an easy way to properly relieve herself. You could also line favorite sleeping spots with puppy pee pads.

Obese cats may leak urine—both as a single problem related to their weight and/or due to diabetes. Diabetic cats tend to drink more water than normal, and therefore have to urinate frequently. Overweight cats may have trouble with bowel movements as well.

However, heavy cats are more likely to be constipated than fecally incontinent.

Many cases of feline urinary incontinence can be traced back to problems within the urinary tract itself, such as kidney stones, bladder stones and crystals, and bladder infections. These problems can lead to urinary blockages with no urine being passed, however, prior to these developing, many cats will appear to be incontinent.

Crystals, stones, and infection can all lead to blood in the urine from irritation to the bladder wall. Along with the irritation comes the urge to urinate frequently. You may notice your cat simply stop wherever she is to squat and pass small amounts of urine. She is aware of this, so it is not “true incontinence,” but the result is the same.

Gain Control

A plan for dealing with urinary and/or fecal incontinence depends on the cause. If your cat has known trauma to the hind end, be prepared that incontinence may follow. Many cats will recover bladder and bowel control, but it can take time and dedication on your part. In the meantime, it may work to set up a large, comfortable crate with a litter box for your cat, also lining the crate with washable or disposable pads. Follow veterinary instructions carefully as to how to empty the bladder (if needed). Take care to keep your cat clean to prevent urine scald (see sidebar, below).

Kittens with incontinence need to be worked up medically, including searching for unusual anatomic defects, such as ectopic ureters. (An ectopic ureter is one that runs from the kidney and attaches to the bladder on the “far side” of the muscle sphincter that controls urination. Since it is past the sphincter, urine may dribble out almost any time.) You may notice small puddles of urine or urine scald with irritated skin.

Common causes of irritated skin,

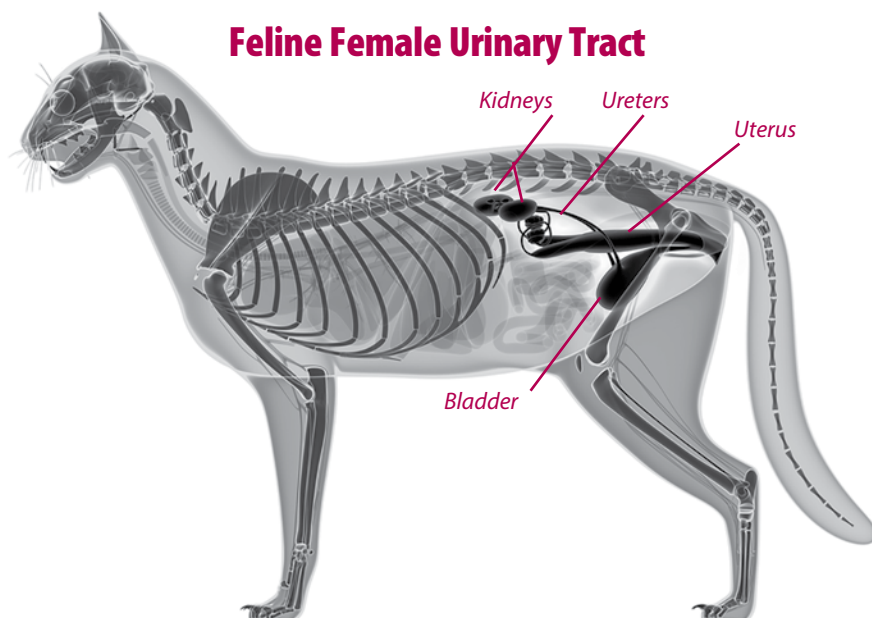
Urine Scald

These red patches of skin are irritating and require treatment

If you see evidence of urine scald—red, sore patches around the urethra and/or anus—clean the area thoroughly with a damp cloth. Once you know the area is clean, protect her skin with a thin layer of petroleum jelly. If the area appears inflamed, triple antibiotic can be used prior to the protective petroleum jelly. Although diaper-rash formulas sound like a great solution, they're not the choice for cats because they inevitably lick off anything you place on their skin. Most diaper-rash formulas include zinc oxide, which is toxic to cats.



Feline Female Urinary Tract



Learn to Express the Bladder: Cats recuperating from pelvic or spinal injuries may benefit from gentle expression of the bladder. If left too full each time, the bladder wall can become stretched and the nerves and muscles will lose tone. Your veterinarian or a veterinary technician can show you how to do this at home.

such as diarrhea, are often easily resolved, but anatomic defects may require surgery. To truly identify an ectopic ureter, special contrast radiographic studies or even exploratory surgery may be needed. Surgery can be curative for these cases.

With senior cats, consideration must be given to doing a medical workup. Diabetes and cognitive disorders could present as incontinence issues. Medical therapy can often help to control, but not cure, the incontinence in these cases.

Affected cats will need a full urinary-problem workup, including a urinalysis as well as radiographs and bloodwork. An ultrasound may be beneficial. Clearing up the urinary-tract problem may end the incontinence.

Middle-aged and senior cats also need to be thoroughly examined for any signs of cancer. Various types of cancer may interfere with urination or defecation. Lymphoma is one of the most common, but other types of cancer can also do this.

Bladder cancer, although uncommon in cats, can lead to urinary incontinence or urinary blockage, depending on the exact location of the growth.

Cats infected with feline leukemia virus sometimes suffer from a lack of urinary control, usually dribbling urine while napping (males more than females). Chemotherapy is reported to help in many of these cases.

Last, but not least, it is important to

determine if the incontinence is a true lack of control or if you are observing behavior problems. Cats may eliminate outside their litter boxes if they are marking, are anxious about other cats or changes in the household, or have

problems with the litter box itself. Litter-box problems can include a change in litter, moving the litter box to a less desirable (in your cat's eyes) location, or a new box that your cat is not comfortable with. Older and arthritic cats may need boxes adjusted to be more accessible—shorter sides or an easier-to-reach location. ■

Multi-Cat Homes

You'll need a method for detection

What to do in multi-cat households when an elimination problem shows up? You will need to separate cats, if at all possible, so you can identify the cat with the problem. That means confining each cat to a separate room with their own litter box or keeping each cat in a large dog crate one at a time to see if the inappropriate soiling stops or continues.



5 THINGS

5 Notes About Vitamin C and Cats

Vitamin C is an antioxidant

- 1 Vitamin C acts as an antioxidant, which means it helps protect cells as they age. Ever heard the old saying "only man, monkeys, and guinea pigs need vitamin C"? Well, it's largely true.
- 2 Primates and guinea pigs cannot synthesize vitamin C, so it must be included in their diets. Dogs and cats can produce their own vitamin C, so there's no reason to look for vitamin C on food labels.
- 3 Vitamin C is sometimes recommended to help acidify urine. It can do that, but be sure your pet needs acid urine by consulting with your veterinarian. Some bladder stones and crystals, like calcium oxalate, form more easily with excess vitamin C in the diet.
- 4 Veterinarians sometimes recommend vitamin C supplementation for cats who are ill or stressed. Do not supplement vitamin C without checking with your veterinarian first.
- 5 Two natural sources of vitamin C that many cats enjoy are strawberries and cantaloupe. They're a great treat, especially cut up and served chilled on a hot summer day. ■



Kitten Training: Carriers

Sure, you can stuff a kitten into a travel crate, but if you train her instead, you'll have a cat who walks right in

You just brought home an adorable ball of fluff. She has all-new accessories, from toys to food and water bowls to a cat tree and bed to curl up in. But don't forget a cat carrier!

Why Use a Carrier?

A cat carrier is the safest way to transport your kitten when traveling or on visits to the veterinarian (and your new kitten is going to need several of these to ensure that she is fully protected through vaccination).

While holding her in your lap might sound like a great idea at first, many kittens get squirmy pretty quickly. This restlessness could result in you getting scratched or in your kitten roaming freely throughout the car, which is a dangerous distraction for the driver. A loose cat can also easily duck out the car door or jump through a lowered window. Keeping your kitten in a carrier keeps her safe and secure through the whole journey.

Teaching your kitten to go into and be relaxed inside a carrier now will help



This Scottish Fold kitten has learned to freely go in and out of the carrier, making him more comfortable with the process.

with any time you need to use the carrier in the future.

Make It a Game

Keep your kitten's carrier in a favorite spot in the house so that it smells like home. While playing, occasionally toss the toy into the carrier so that she has to run in to get it. You can also toss treats into the carrier, or hide some in there for

her to find later. The carrier should be a normal, neutral part of your kitten's life.

Once in a while when she goes into the carrier, close the door. Wait a couple minutes and then let her back out to resume playing.

Feed your kitten in her carrier to give her another reason to love it. This will also be helpful if you have older cats who want to try to steal some kitten food!

Loading Time

When you need to load your kitten into her carrier for a trip, try not to act like anything special is happening. Send her into her carrier for breakfast as usual, and then keep the door closed (if she is going to the veterinarian for blood work or a surgery, you may need to hold off on actually feeding her). For trips between mealtimes, toss her toy or a treat into the carrier.

If needed, you can gently load her into the carrier, but avoid forcibly stuffing. It might work, but it may cause her to resist you the next time you try to get her to go into the carrier. ■

Choosing a Carrier

Materials and windows are your main concerns

Cat-carrier choices are plentiful. Cats don't vary in size as much as dogs, so the size of your carrier doesn't make much difference unless you have a large cat.

Most carriers have a front door, and some also have a top door. A top door helps when your cat isn't sure about getting in or out, as it is easier to reach in. Be sure that you are comfortable working the mechanism on any doors that your carrier may have.

The material depends on your preference. Plastic crates are sturdy and easiest to clean. Wicker carriers are stylish in appearance, but kittens may chew on loose ends and they are more difficult to clean in the event of an accident. Soft-sided crates sometimes have mesh windows, which could be a problem for your kitten if she scratches at them.



Dog Crates for Kittens

The larger wire crates give your kitten a full view and have room for a litter box

When you first get your new kitten, you may not want her roaming the entire house, especially if you have other pets that you want to introduce gradually. One easy way to keep your kitten confined but able to interact with the rest of your household is to use a large dog crate. Add a litter box, food and water bowls, and a few toys to turn the crate into a perfect kitty condo. You may even have room for a small cat tree.

Solid-sided crates provide a little protection if you're worried about a larger pet nipping at kitten paws, while wire crates allow for a 360-degree view and plenty of climbing opportunities. Fabric or "tent" crates also make great kitten housing and are lighter weight (for moving them about).

When your kitten has gained full-house privileges, crates can be useful for separating a sick cat from other pets, for separating at meal time if one cat is on a special diet, and as an apartment for a senior cat who gets lost in a large space.

Budget Minded? The most economical way to purchase a large dog crate is to check out yard sales. Make sure that the crate has all of its parts and no pieces that could poke into an eye or otherwise hurt the animal. Avoid crates with gaps that your kitten could escape through.

Subtle, Sneaky Digestive Issues

With malabsorption, cats can't digest nutrients

Your cat has a ravenous appetite but never gains weight and might even be losing weight. In addition, you may notice the litter box has more deposits than ever before—often soft and “slimy” with a worse odor than usual. Your cat may be suffering from a malabsorption/maldigestion disorder. Malabsorption means the cat can't absorb the nutrients. Maldigestion occurs when your cat is not producing the enzymes needed to digest her food.



that cause diarrhea and inhibit absorption of nutrients.

Dr. Jodi Gookin at North Carolina State notes that another bacterial pair shows both “good” and “bad,” just like *E. coli*. “*Enterococcus hirae* is the most popular enterococcus for a healthy kitten to have inside the small intestine,” she says. In contrast, *Enterococcus faecalis* is associated with illness.

Along with bacteria, protozoal parasites can interfere with the cat's normal digestion and absorption of nutrients.

Digestion Gone Awry

The pancreas produces most of the digestive enzymes. Pancreatitis, which is inflammation of the pancreas, can cause leakage of digestive enzymes inside the pancreas. Without enough digestive enzymes, your cat can't properly digest her food.

A lack of digestive enzymes may be corrected with pancreatic enzyme supplements. The supplements contain proteases to digest proteins, lipases to help with fat digestion, and amylase to assist with carbohydrate digestion.

Intestinal Difficulties

The intestines are lined with epithelial cells that have small projections called microvilli that increase the surface area of the intestines and aid in digestion and absorption of nutrients. Anything that interferes with the actions or health of the microvilli can cause malabsorption.

Among these interfering culprits are pathogenic bacteria. Feline intestines have plenty of bacteria that normally live there, and many, if not most, are helpful. They may aid in digestion or simply take up space and block pathogenic bacteria.

E. coli (*Escherichia coli*) is one type of bacteria that has both pathogenic and beneficial versions that can be present in the intestines. Also, think of *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* that, along with various *Clostridia*, can be pathogenic in humans, cats, and other species.

Pathogenic bacteria can interfere with the absorption of nutrients in a couple of different ways. Physically, they can attach to microvilli and prevent nutrient movement. They can also produce toxins

What Is Malabsorption?

The improper digestion of nutrients, regardless of cause

Symptoms include:

- ▶ Anemia
- ▶ Ascites (fluid in the abdomen)
- ▶ Chronic diarrhea
- ▶ Consuming feces (coprophagia)
- ▶ Dehydration
- ▶ Eating inappropriate items (pica)
- ▶ Lack of appetite or ravenous eating
- ▶ Weight loss

Diagnosis is made by clinical signs, examination, urinalysis, blood tests, and ultrasound. Treatment varies with suspected cause. The most frequent cause is inflammatory bowel disease.

Under Control

Malabsorption can have a wide range of causes, but with a step-by-step plan, we can arrive at a diagnosis and come up with a treatment plan to help your cat. Understand that treatment may be necessary for the life of your cat. ■

Inflammatory Bowel Disease Is Often the Cause

Vomiting is a primary symptom; it most often begins in middle age

Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) may be the biggest cause of malabsorption in cats. The most common inflammatory cells are lymphocytes, plasmacytes, and eosinophils. These cells act as part of your cat's immune system and usually provide life-saving functions from invading organisms. When they go awry, they can cause serious health problems.

IBD tends to occur in middle-aged cats. The stomach can be involved, with vomiting as a primary sign. Alternatively, it can be primarily an intestinal problem with malabsorption and diarrhea. A definitive diagnosis requires a biopsy of tissue from the stomach wall and/or intestinal lining. This may be done via endoscopy or might require an abdominal surgery.

Treatment often requires trial and error. Diet change is usually part of the treatment. A true diet test means your cat must ONLY eat the test diet for six to 12 weeks. If you have a multi-cat household that may mean all cats go on the diet, especially if you free feed. Diet may or may not control the symptoms.

Immunosuppressive medications, such as prednisone, may be needed to control your cat's IBD. These medications tend to be started at a relatively high dose, with gradual reduction to the minimum dose required to keep the IBD under control. This is not an illness that is generally cured, but rather is controlled.

During the initial attempts to get the IBD under control, your veterinarian may also prescribe antibiotics or other enteric medications to decrease populations of pathogenic bacteria. Fecal examinations will need to be done to rule out any parasites, including protozoa. Any such intestinal pathogens will need to be treated first. Probiotics may be offered as assistance in getting the intestinal bacterial flora back to normal.

Eye Drainage Must Be Addressed

The cause could be benign, but the chance of it being more means a veterinary examination is a necessity

Q Every once in a while, my cat's eyes water for no reason. They clear up on their own, so I haven't been to the veterinarian about it, but I'm wondering. Should I get her checked?

A Eye discharge is common in cats. It may have a simple cause or indicate a serious disease, so you would be wise to get your cat checked.

You didn't state how old your cat is, but young cats are especially susceptible to a variety of upper-respiratory infections by both viruses and bacteria. An eye discharge is a common symptom of both infections.

Both viral and bacterial infections can cause discharge from the eyes and/or nose. In many cases, cats who are affected with these organisms may experience chronic, intermittent discharge from the eyes, even if they do not have signs of the actual disease.

There are vaccinations to help protect your cat from some of these infections, like feline calicivirus and feline herpesvirus. Although no vaccine is 100 percent effective, vaccines decrease the



While drainage may or may not be a problem, any indication of pain, like this squinting eye, needs to be addressed immediately.

chance a cat will become infected. If he does, vaccines may decrease the severity of the disease and the likelihood that he will infect other cats. So, vaccination status is the first thing to discuss with your veterinarian.

The appearance of the discharge and whether it is coming from one or both eyes can also provide clues to its cause in some cases. Usually, clear, thin discharge is less concerning than yellowish, thick discharge, as the latter may suggest

either a primary bacterial infection or a bacterial infection secondary to another process, such as a viral infection. Bacterial infections may respond to antibiotics, while viral infections do not.

Discharge from both eyes may suggest a diffuse, systemic problem, such as a viral infection. Discharge from one eye may be seen in association with processes that are more localized, such as a blocked nasolacrimal duct, which normally drains tears from the eye to the tip of the nose, or a foreign body such as plant material lodged in the eye.

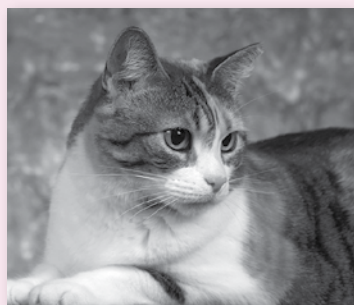
Allergies to inhaled substances can cause ocular discharge in cats, but in these cases the discharge would be expected from both eyes.

Your veterinarian will look at other structures in the eye to get an idea of the general health of the eye. Any cloudiness of the cornea, internal chambers of the eye or the lens, or redness/swelling of the conjunctiva (pink tissue) should prompt immediate attention and consultation with a veterinarian.

Other signs that a veterinarian should see your cat include those that suggest discomfort of the eye, such as keeping the eye either completely or partially closed, avoiding light, and/or pawing the region around the eye. These signs may indicate corneal ulceration and/or glaucoma. Both require immediate veterinary attention.

Please let us know how this turns out.

All my best,
Elizabeth



Elizabeth works with the Cornell Feline Health Center in providing the answer on this page (vet.cornell.edu/fhc/).

© HAPPENING NOW...

Cat Video to Watch: The TV show "America's Got Talent" included a mind-boggling cat act, with some amazing tricks by very happy cats. You can see it here at: https://youtu.be/8e0z3-iZ_TY.

Declawing Bill: NJ.com reported that New Jersey state lawmakers are moving on a bill to ban declawing. If passed, it will penalize anyone in the state who declaws or has a cat declawed, with fines up to \$3,000 and up to six months in jail. The proposal, approved by the state Senate Economic Growth Committee, would make an exception if a veterinarian deems it necessary for the cat's health and well-being.

Veterinarian Offers Reward: Dr. Inayat Kathio, of Luzerne County, Pa., is offering a \$1,000 reward to find out who shot

Pandora, according to Fox43 WNEP. The pregnant cat is now recovering, thanks to Dr. Kathio. However, it's not the first recent shooting in the county.

"(The) bullet...fractured the cat's long bone and a tendon and cut some blood vessels," Dr. Kathio explained. "It was infected, too, and if I didn't perform surgery, gangrene would've set in and the cat would have lost its leg and ultimately lost its life." Dr. Kathio has treated six cats suffering from gunshot wounds this year. He hopes the reward will lead to justice for Pandora and the other cats.

Oldest Cat in the World: According to FoxNews, a 30-year-old British cat named Rubble is now the oldest living cat in the world. The oldest cat ever, says the report, is Creme Puff who lived 38 years and three days. Creme Puff died in 2005. ■

Coming Up ...

- ▶ Vestibular Disease in Young Cats
- ▶ Feline Heat-Stress Issues
- ▶ Combatting Compulsive Behaviors
- ▶ When The Diagnosis Is Cushing's Disease