

Help Your Pet Avoid the Pain and Suffering of These 5 Diseases – It's Simple

Ever wonder why some pets are so long-lived yet others seem to suffer so much? Well, it might come down to these simple basics on each of the five top preventable diseases. From diabetes to constipation, here's what your pet wants you to know.

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Cats today suffer from a number of health problems linked directly to the diet and lifestyle their owners provide for them
- Common preventable conditions in cats include lower urinary tract disease, hyperthyroidism, diabetes, constipation and upper respiratory viruses
- There are many things you can do to help your cat avoid developing diet and lifestyle-related illnesses
- Upper respiration infections can occur in any cat, but are more commonly seen in kitties living in shelters, catteries and feral colonies
- Your cat's healthy immune system is what will either prevent a viral infection in the first place, or defeat it once it occurs

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Today's kitties suffer from a long list of disorders that are primarily diet- and/or lifestyle-related, and therefore preventable. As a concerned cat parent, you want to do everything you can to keep your feline companion healthy and happy.

The following are five of the most common conditions that land cats at the veterinarian's office, along with suggestions on how you can help prevent your own fuzzy family member from becoming a statistic.

No. 1 — Lower Urinary Tract Disease

Feline lower urinary tract disease (FLUTD) describes a group of conditions affecting the bladder or urethra. A few of the most common include cystitis (inflammation of the bladder), bacterial infection and urethral blockage.

If you think your cat might have a problem in the lower urinary tract, it's important to make an appointment with your veterinarian. It's also extremely important to focus on reducing or eliminating potential stressors in your cat's life.

Stress typically has three sources: environmental, immunologic and nutritional. Tips for preventing lower urinary tract disease in your cat:

- As much as possible, minimize environmental stress, which can be anything from a move to a new home, the birth of a baby, a divorce or the addition of a new pet. All these things can create emotional stress in your cat.

Talk with your **holistic veterinarian** about calming pheromone products, homeopathic remedies and flower essences designed to balance emotional disturbances in kitties.

- Minimize immunologic stressors by not over-vaccinating your cat. If you have an indoor-only kitty and aren't inclined to bring home any strays, the risk of exposure to infectious diseases is almost nonexistent, and unnecessary vaccines can put a tremendous amount of immunologic stress on your cat.
- Eliminate nutritional stress by avoiding poor-quality, grain-based, starchy and rendered diets that contain additives, toxic preservatives, and unnecessary rancid fats, salts and sugar.

Transition your cat to a species-appropriate, balanced and fresh food diet or a human-grade canned food.

No. 2 — Hyperthyroidism

Feline hyperthyroidism is the most common endocrine disorder of domestic cats, with over 10% of kitties over the age of 10 diagnosed with the disease.

It's usually caused by a benign tumor on the thyroid gland called an adenoma. In rare cases, the tumor is a carcinoma, which is cancer. Tips for helping your cat avoid hyperthyroidism:

- Feed a balanced, fresh food and species-appropriate diet that is respectful of a cat's natural iodine intake (which is very low)
- Do not buy canned food that is not labeled BPA-free
- Avoid feeding your cat a fish-based diet, or any food containing soy products
- Rid your environment of **flame retardant chemicals**
- Provide your cat with an organic pet bed
- Purchase a high-quality air purifier for your cat's environment

No. 3 — Diabetes

Sadly, feline diabetes rates have skyrocketed over the last decade. The disease is most often seen in overweight and obese adult cats who are fed biologically inappropriate dry food diets and get little to no exercise.

Feline diabetes is almost 100% preventable, so for the sake of your precious kitty, give serious consideration to the importance of nutrition, exercise and maintaining your pet at a healthy weight. Tips for preventing diabetes in your cat:

- Avoid dry food. All dry foods require starch (carbs) for manufacturing. Avoid canned cat foods containing grains (e.g., corn, wheat, rice, soy, millet, quinoa). Also avoid starchy "grain-free" high calorie, high-glycemic diets containing potatoes, chickpeas, peas or tapioca.

All the carbs (starch) in your cat's food — which can be as much as 80% of the contents — break down into sugar. Excess sugar can result in diabetes.

Help your cat stay trim by feeding a portion controlled, moisture-rich, balanced and species-appropriate diet consisting of a variety of unadulterated protein sources and healthy fats, and specific nutritional supplements as necessary.

- See to it that your kitty gets a minimum of 20 minutes of daily aerobic exercise.
- Don't allow your cat to be over-vaccinated. There's a growing body of research that connects autoimmune disorders to diabetes in dogs, and the same may be true for cats. If your kitty has had vaccines in the past, there's a high likelihood her immunity will last a lifetime.

Each time a fully immunized pet receives a repetitive set of vaccines, it increases the risk of overstimulating the immune system.

If you're concerned about your cat's disease risk, find a veterinarian who runs titer tests to measure antibody response from previous vaccinations. Titer results will tell you whether vaccination is necessary, and for which specific diseases.

No. 4 — Constipation

A cat is constipated when the stool is too large and/or hard to be passed. If your kitty is straining in her litterbox but has nothing much to show for it, or if her poop is dry and hard, it's likely constipation is to blame.

Your kitty should poop every day. Expelling bowel toxins on a daily basis is an important part of the natural detoxification process. Since there are medical reasons for constipation, make sure to talk to your veterinarian if you think your kitty is constipated. Tips for preventing constipation in your cat:

- Feed a nutritionally balanced, species-appropriate diet. If your cat is eating kibble, you'll need to do a slow transition away from dry food. This process can take weeks or even months, but it's well worth the effort. Not only will it help prevent constipation, it will make your kitty much healthier overall.
- Consider adding bone broth or water to your cat's food to help lubricate the colon. You can also try adding flavoring to your kitty's water (e.g., the liquid from a can of tuna or cat food) to make it more enticing.
- Insure your cat gets some exercise each day.
- Add a pinch of psyllium or coconut fiber at each meal. If hairballs are a problem, consider adding a non-petroleum hairball remedy to each meal or a **dab of coconut oil** to help the hair move more quickly through the GI tract.
- Some kitties benefit from 100% canned pumpkin or a natural laxative like aloe vera juice added to their food.

No. 5 — Upper Respiratory Virus

Feline upper respiratory disease is a complex syndrome that can affect your kitty's eyes, nose, sinuses, throat and mouth. Upper respiration infections can occur in any cat, but are more commonly seen in kitties living in shelters, catteries and feral colonies.

The two most common upper respiratory viruses in cats are feline herpes 1, also known as rhinotracheitis and calicivirus. Your cat's healthy immune system is what will either prevent a viral infection in the first place, or defeat it once it occurs. Tips for keeping your cat's immune system strong:

- Feed a balanced, species-appropriate diet.
- Minimize stressful events in her life.
- Less-is-more is the best approach to vaccinating your cat. If she received a full set of kitten shots in her first year of life and she lives indoors, she probably has no need to be re-vaccinated as an adult. Ask your holistic vet to run titers to determine which of the core feline diseases, if any, your cat isn't already immune to. Being a vaccine minimalist will help your kitty's all-important immune system remain balanced and functional for a lifetime.

Sources and References

[PetMD, February 17, 2010](#)
