

# Feline Diabetes



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## INTRODUCTION

Feline diabetes, known as diabetes mellitus, has become an increasingly common condition in cats. It often occurs in cats that are overweight and/or older. As in humans, cats have a pancreas that should produce insulin to regulate the sugar in their bodies from their diet. Diabetes occurs when a cat's body is not able to properly balance out the sugar (glucose) in their bloodstream.

If your veterinarian diagnoses your cat with diabetes, you will need to work together to create a plan to manage this disease. You are an integral part in the treatment for your cat. When diabetes goes untreated, you may notice increased signs and symptoms, which can progress leading to pain, nerve damage, muscle weakness, other diseases or conditions, and even death.

## RISK FACTORS

Cats that are at a higher risk for developing diabetes are male, neutered, over seven years of age, and overweight or obese. If your cat has been diagnosed with one of the following diseases, they are also at a higher risk for developing diabetes: pancreatic disease, hyperthyroidism, renal disease, neoplasia, acromegaly, hyperadrenocorticism, and/or infection, or if your cat is being treated with a class of drugs called corticosteroids.

## DIAGNOSIS

Feline diabetes is not always simple to diagnose. Your veterinarian will need to conduct a thorough examination of your cat, obtain an individual medical history, and perform laboratory tests. In the early stages of diabetes, you may notice that your cat "seems a little off" or "less interactive."

### *Clinical Signs*

If you observe any of the following behaviors or problems in your cat, contact your veterinarian because the information may alert them to the possibility your cat has diabetes.

- Weight loss
- Drinking more water
- Drinking from unusual places
- Begging for food/insatiable appetite
- Decreased ability to jump
- Walking on heels instead of toes (known as "plantigrade" stance)
- Lethargy
- Urine is sticky or difficult to clean
- More frequent urination or urination outside of litter box



### *Testing*

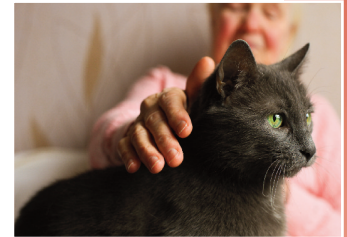
Your veterinarian will need to conduct blood and urine tests to properly identify whether your cat has diabetes and rule out other diseases or conditions.

## TREATMENT

Once your veterinarian has diagnosed your cat with diabetes, you will work together to create a monitoring and treatment plan. There are different options to treat diabetes, and many cats have other diseases or conditions that may complicate treatment. It is important to find the best plan for you and your cat. It is crucial to be honest with your veterinarian about your goals, time, ability to monitor and treat, and potential limitations, as well as to maintain a frequent, open dialogue.

### *Goals of Treatment*

- Potential remission is the goal, but is not possible for all cats
- Blood glucose regulation and stabilization
- Stable, appropriate body weight
- Reduction of clinical signs (noted on opposite page)
- Good quality of life
- Avoidance of hypoglycemia (low blood sugar), hyperglycemia (high blood sugar), ketoacidosis (cell starvation where fat breaks down to provide energy), or neuropathy (pain or damage to nerves)



## TREATMENT OPTIONS

If your cat is diagnosed with diabetes mellitus, you can increase your ability to successfully manage your cat's needs by having regular communication with your veterinary team. Most cats require a specific diet and insulin for proper management of diabetes.

### *Feeding Recommendations and Diet*

To help keep the diabetes under control and to prevent further damage, your cat needs to maintain a healthy weight. As with humans, a healthy diet and active lifestyle can make your cat's treatment more effective and improve quality of life. Your veterinarian will determine your cat's ideal weight, and help find a low carb diet to help your cat achieve and maintain that weight. For best results at home, use a pediatric scale for the most accurate weight.

### *Insulin Therapy*

Many insulin formulations are available that can be combined with an appropriate diet. Insulin is delivered by injection and your veterinarian can teach you how to successfully test glucose levels and administer injections to your cat. Most cats require twice daily injections. Many caregivers of cats with diabetes find that with practice they are able to administer the insulin to their cats quite easily.

### **Initial Treatment**

Once you and your veterinarian choose a treatment plan, you will learn how to monitor your cat and administer medications appropriately. Be sure to ask for a demonstration from the veterinary practice how to test glucose levels, handle insulin, and administer it to your cat. If you keep a daily treatment log including the dose, administration time, observations, food and water intake, and urine output, fine-tuning your cat's treatment will be easier. In some cases, hospitalization may be needed at the beginning of treatment. Your veterinarian may also identify and treat any pain your cat may be experiencing.

### **MONITORING**

An important part of the treatment plan is monitoring your cat's response to the insulin and making adjustments as needed. There are three different monitoring protocols – intensive, standard, and loose. You and your veterinarian will determine the method that works best for you and your cat.



Many diabetic cats can live happy and normal lives. To help your cat live a long life, maintain recommended checkups, work to keep their blood sugar level stable, strive to maintain a healthy body weight, and manage other diseases.

Remember, you play a key role in your cat's diabetes treatment plan, so be sure you are open and honest with your veterinarian about your ability to monitor and provide insulin therapy. Each cat is different and your veterinarian will work with you on an individualized healthcare plan for you and your cat.

For more information on feline diabetes, visit  
[www.catfriendly.com/diabetes](http://www.catfriendly.com/diabetes).

**You are an important member of your cat's healthcare team.  
You are instrumental in helping with the success of  
treatments and improved healthcare for your cat.**

We wish to thank Boehringer Ingelheim for sponsoring this document.

