

ADVICE FOR PET OWNERS

Preventing further urinary tract problems in your cat

A lower urinary tract disease has been diagnosed in your cat. One of the best ways to prevent a recurrence of this disease is to change your cat's diet. And if your cat has urinary stones, it's important to increase your cat's water intake, which includes feeding a canned or moistened diet. Here are some tips on how you can help your cat avoid another flare-up in the future.

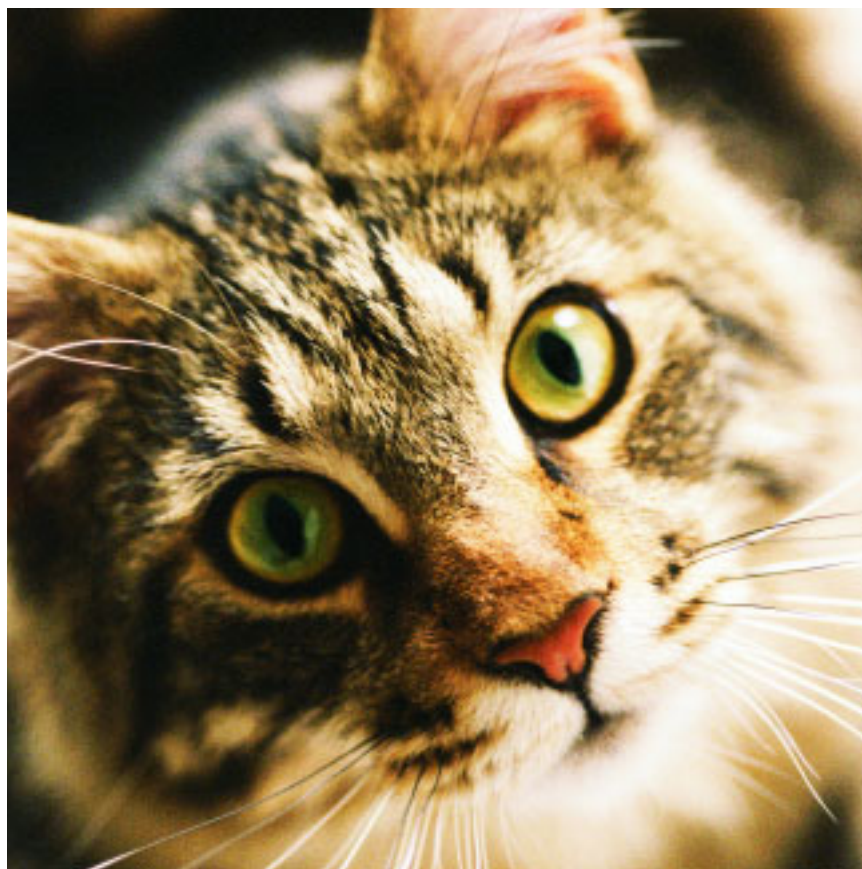
Changing your cat's diet

It's important to feed your cat a canned or moistened diet that is formulated to reduce the risk of urinary tract disease. But for many owners, feeding dry foods is a long-standing custom, and changing to a new diet is not always easy or convenient. To help you and your pet make this important transition, try these suggestions collected from clients and pets who have successfully made the change:

1. Before changing diets, be sure your pet is feeling better and eating its usual diet normally.
2. If possible, change the diet when you have fewer outside distractions so you can monitor it better.
3. Plan where to buy the new food, where you will store it, and how you will discard used cans. A few minutes of thoughtful planning now may save hours of frustration later.
4. Establish a new feeding schedule. If your pet has food available all the time, start leaving its food out for only one hour twice a day.
5. Once the new feeding schedule is established, introduce the new diet. Start by replacing 25% of your pet's regular food with the new food mixed in. As your pet begins to eat the new food, reduce the amount of the other diet as much as possible.

Complete the change over one to two weeks.

6. If canned foods are not acceptable to you or your pet, adding one to two cups of hot water per cup of dry food may work as a substitute.
7. Many cat foods have been formulated to help control urinary tract problems. Don't hesitate to ask to try a different food if your pet doesn't like the first one. But once you've found a diet your cat likes, stick to it.
8. Small quantities of flavoring agents (e.g. meat drippings; tuna, clam, or salmon juice) can be mixed with the new diet to make it more appealing. If you want to try other flavors, please check with your veterinarian first.
9. You'll be given advice on the minimum amount of





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food your pet should eat each day. If your pet doesn't eat all its food every day, this may be normal. As long as no more than 10% of your pet's weight is lost, you should not be too concerned during the transition period.

10. Feed your cat in a quiet environment in which it won't be distracted. If feeding is a time when you enjoy watching or petting your pet, your veterinarian can suggest some alternative activities for you to substitute at a different time, such as play, teaching tricks, and walking.

Preventing urinary stones

The most important thing you can do to help avoid the formation of another stone is to increase your pet's water intake. Increasing water intake, which will create dilute urine, has three benefits for you and your pet. First, it reduces the concentration of stone-forming minerals in the

Flavor your pet's water by adding ice cubes made out of meat or fish broth.

urine. Second, by making your pet urinate more often, it reduces the time available for a stone to form. Finally, since an increased water intake reduces the risk of forming a new stone, you may not have to start feeding your cat a special veterinary diet or giving medication that prevents stone formation.

Besides changing your cat's diet (as described above), there are other ways to increase your cat's water intake. These tips can be used by themselves or in combination. Feel free to try the ones that most appeal to you.

1. Add water to the food, whether it's dry or canned. Start slowly, and add more water as your pet's appetite permits. As mentioned above, if you have food available all the time, readjusting the feeding schedule to two one-hour meals a day before you begin adding water to the food will help your pet accept the water more readily.

2. If your cat tends to ignore the bowl of water by its food dish, experiment with the shape of the bowl. Some animals prefer a full, shallow dish; others seem to like reaching down into a container.
3. Add "wet" foods to your pet's food, such as water-packed tuna, clam juice, and low-salt gravy mixes.
4. Offer distilled or bottled water instead of tap water.
5. Try a pet "fountain" that can be purchased from pet stores and magazines.*
6. Leave some water in the bottom of a sink, bathtub, or shower. Putting a shallow bowl under a slow drip ensures a drink of fresh water whenever your pet wants one.
7. Flavor your pet's water by adding ice cubes made out of meat or fish broth. To make a broth cube, bring the contents of a 6-oz can of tuna or salmon or a cup of ground meat to boil in two cups of water, simmer for 10 minutes, and strain through cheesecloth into an ice tray.

Don't salt your pet's food because it can actually increase the risk that some kinds of stones will form. However, you can use "lite" salt. Unfortunately, most pets don't like the taste of lite salt, so it must be given in capsules. One way to

tell if your pet is drinking enough is to measure urine concentration. Your veterinarian may show you how to collect a urine sample and ask you to bring it to the next recheck to determine how well the treatment is working.

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*One such device is available from Veterinary Ventures, Mary Burns, DVM, 844 Bell St., Reno, NV 89503; (800) 805-7532.