

What is it?

FIC is condition in cats involving the bladder and urethra. It occurs most commonly in young to middle-aged cats that are overweight, lead a sedentary lifestyle, have restricted outdoor access, use an indoor litter tray, eat a dry diet and live in a multi-cat household. The clinical signs we see due to cystitis (inflammation of the bladder) involve;

- Difficult or painful urination
- Increased frequency of urination
- Blood in the urine
- Urinating outside of the litter tray
- Overgrooming around their back end
- Straining with inability to pass urine (mostly male cats due to a blockage)



FIC occurs without an obvious underlying cause; however, these cats quite commonly have a number of similar abnormalities which can contribute and exacerbate the disease;

- Deficient bladder lining (insufficient mucus layer made up of glycosaminoglycans (GAGs) that protect the bladder wall)
- Inflammation caused by stimulation of local nerves to the bladder via the brain due to stress
- Stress - quite often an episode of FIC is triggered by a stressful event e.g. other cats, redecorating, moving house etc

Blocked Cats

This is a medical emergency and if you suspect your cat may be blocked please contact us ASAP. Signs include straining in the litter tray unproductively (which can look like constipation), vocalising, licking around back end and a painful abdomen. This mostly only happens in male cats due to their anatomy and can be caused by urethral spasm, bladder stones or crystals/mucus in the urine.

Treatment generally involves a general anaesthetic in order to place a urinary catheter to empty the bladder and sometimes imaging such as an X-ray or ultrasound. These cats usually stay with us for a few days with the catheter in place, on intravenous fluid therapy, so we can monitor urine output and start them on pain relief and medication to help with the underlying causes.

Management

1. **Increasing water intake** - this is very important as it helps to produce more dilute urine. This can be done by feeding a wet diet, increasing the number of water bowls in the house or use of a cat water fountain.
2. **Decreasing stressors** - increasing the number of litter trays (should be number of cats +1), making sure the litter trays aren't too near their feeding area, making the trays more private (e.g. placing a cardboard box over tray with a hole cut out for entry), using a cat pheromone diffuser e.g. feliway.
3. **Weight loss/increasing activity** - encouraging play with toys and use of scratch posts
4. **Glycosaminoglycan (GAGs) supplements** - if we have prescribed your cat Cystophan, please give a single tablet once daily
5. **Dietary Management** - cats are less likely to have a recurrence if on wet food and if we change them onto a specific urinary diet. These diets change the composition of the urine to help prevent urine sludging, crystal formation or bacterial infection, they also contain anti-anxiety compounds. Diets need to be **introduced** slowly - this can be done by mixing it with their old diet and slowly increasing the quantity of urinary food. Warming the food can help with palatability.

Useful websites: <https://icatcare.org/advice/cat-health/feline-idiopathic-cystitis-fic>
<http://learnonline.cats.org.uk/content/ufo/14.html>