



# Understanding FLUTD

## Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease

### What is FLUTD?


FLUTD stands for **Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease**. This is not a single diagnosis, but rather a descriptive term for a collection of conditions that affect the bladder and urethra (the tube that carries urine out of the body) in cats.

The symptoms of FLUTD are generally the same, regardless of the underlying cause.



### Recognizing the Signs: What to Look For

If your cat is showing any of the following signs, it is an **emergency**—especially if they are straining to urinate with little or no production. **Call your veterinarian immediately.**

| Sign  | Description  |
|---|--|
| Dysuria   | Painful or difficult urination (may cry or strain).  |
| Pollakiuria   | Increased frequency of urination.  |
| Hematuria   | Blood in the urine (may appear pink or red).   |
| Periuria  | Urinating outside of the litter box (e.g., in the sink, tub, on clothes).                              |
| Excessive Licking   | Licking their private area more than usual.  |
|  <b>Urethral Obstruction</b> | <b>EMERGENCY!</b> Straining to urinate with no urine coming out. Can lead to death within 24-48 hours. |

## Why Does FLUTD Happen? Understanding the Causes

Identifying the underlying cause is crucial for effective treatment. In about 50-70% of FLUTD cases, no specific cause is found. These cases are often diagnosed as **Feline Idiopathic Cystitis (FIC)**, meaning the cause is unknown and is highly linked to **stress**.

| Cause (Diagnosis)                       | Description   | Treatment Focus   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>Feline Idiopathic Cystitis (FIC)</b> | The most common cause. Inflammation of the bladder wall with no infectious cause. Strongly linked to environmental or emotional stress.         | <b>Stress reduction, environmental enrichment, pain control.</b>        |
| <b>Urolithiasis (Bladder Stones)</b>    | Mineral or crystal buildup in the bladder (most commonly struvite or calcium oxalate). These cause irritation and can lead to a fatal blockage. | <b>Prescription diet, surgery (if needed), increased water intake.</b>  |
| <b>Urethral Plugs</b>                   | A mix of mineral crystals, mucus, and inflammatory cells that forms a plug in the urethra. This is a life-threatening emergency.                | <b>Emergency unblocking procedure, prescription diet, pain control.</b> |
| <b>Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)</b>    | Bacterial infection of the bladder. <b>Less common in younger cats</b> but increases in frequency in senior cats (over 10 years old).           | <b>Antibiotics (based on culture), increased water intake.</b>          |

## How Is FLUTD Treated?

Treatment is based entirely on the underlying cause determined by your veterinarian through diagnostics (urine analysis, blood work, X-rays/ultrasound).

### 1. Treating Urethral Obstruction (Emergency)

- **Immediate Catheterization:** Your cat will be sedated or anesthetized, and a urinary catheter will be placed to remove the obstruction and allow urine to flow.
- **Fluid Therapy:** Intravenous fluids are given to correct imbalances caused by kidney damage.
- **Hospitalization:** Cats usually require 2-5 days of hospitalization for monitoring.

### 2. Treating FIC (Feline Idiopathic Cystitis) The Most Common Cause

Since FIC is primarily related to stress and inflammation, treatment focuses on these areas:

- **Pain Management:** Medications (e.g., Buprenorphine, NSAIDs) are used to relieve pain and reduce inflammation in the bladder wall.
- **Dietary Changes:** Switching to a **prescription urinary diet** that promotes proper urinary processing and encourages water intake.
- **Stress Reduction/Environmental Enrichment (The "5 Pillars"):**
  1. Provide **safe resting spots**.
  2. Provide multiple, easily accessible **litter boxes** (Number of boxes = Number of cats + 1).
  3. Provide multiple and separate **food and water stations** (especially running water fountains).
  4. Provide opportunities for **predatory play** (interactive toys).
  5. Provide consistent and positive **human-cat interaction**.

### 3. Treating Bladder Stones (Urolithiasis)

- **Prescription Diet:** For Struvite stones, a specialized diet can often dissolve them within weeks to months.
- **Surgery (Cystotomy):** Calcium Oxalate stones cannot be dissolved and must be surgically removed.

## Long-Term Management: Prevention is Key

Because FIC and stones can recur, long-term management is necessary.

- **Increase Water Intake:** Use water fountains, add water to canned food, or switch to a canned food diet.
  - **Feliway/Calm Diffusers:** Pheromone products can help reduce anxiety in the home environment.
  - **Maintain Prescribed Diet:** Do not switch your cat off the recommended urinary diet without consulting your veterinarian.
  - **Regular Check-ups:** Follow your vet's recommendations for repeat urine checks.
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## IMPORTANT TAKEAWAY

If your cat is straining to urinate and producing little to no urine, **this is an emergency and requires immediate veterinary attention.**