



FELINE CONSTIPATION

Constipation is a common problem, particularly in older cats. Symptoms of constipation include dry, hard stools and pain and/or straining while defecating. Cats with constipation may spend an unusually long time in the litter box or have accidents outside the litter box. In severe cases, constipation leads to decreased appetite, vomiting, and blood in the stool.

Constipation is a sign of large bowel problems and is not a disease in itself. There are many causes for constipation, and sometimes laboratory tests or x-rays are necessary to find the underlying cause. While some cats may have only one or two isolated incidents of constipation in their lifetime, other cats develop chronic problems with constipation that require lifelong treatment. Siamese cats are more likely than other breeds to develop chronic problems with constipation.

Treatment of constipation includes laxatives, subcutaneous fluids, enemas, and diet changes. In severe cases multiple enemas under anesthesia are necessary. Surgery to remove the diseased part of the colon may be recommended for cats with chronic constipation problems. In most cases, increasing the fiber in the diet is helpful in preventing a recurrence. Specialized diets such as W/D contain high levels of fiber. If your cat refuses to eat a specialized diet, canned pumpkin or fiber supplements such as Metamucil can be added to the regular diet. In general, canned food is preferable because it contains more water. Cats with constipation problems should be encouraged to drink large amounts of water in order to stay well hydrated. Regular exercise is also helpful.

Please monitor your cat's bowel movements daily. If your cat goes more than a day or two without defecating or has very hard, dry stools, please call the clinic.