

# Feline Interstitial Cystitis

## Lower Urinary Tract Disease

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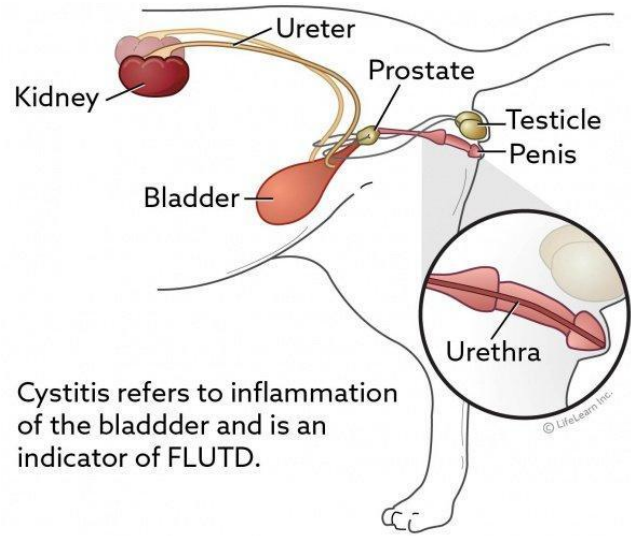
### What is cystitis?

Feline Interstitial Cystitis (FIC) is a general term referring to inflammation in the urinary bladder. The term cystitis does not imply a specific underlying cause.

### What are the signs of FIC?

Typical signs in cats with FIC are those of inflammation and irritation of the lower urinary tract. The common clinical signs are:

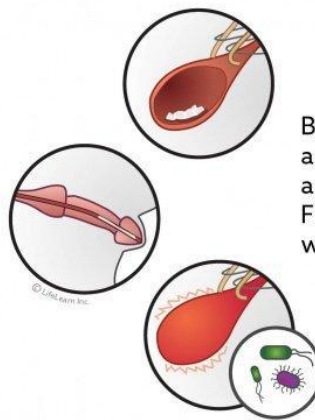
- Increased frequency of urination
- Difficulty urinating
- Spending a long time straining in the litter box while passing only small quantities of urine (often confused with constipation)
- Bloody urine
- Foul smelling or cloudy urine.
- Urinating in unusual places.
- Excessive grooming or licking of the genital region.
- Inability to urinate or complete urinary tract (Straining without urine production)
- Seek immediate veterinary care - can be quickly life-threatening if untreated.



### What causes FIC?

There are a vast number of potential causes of FIC; as previously mentioned, some cats experience severe inflammation of the bladder and/or urethra without an identifiable cause. Some of the potential causes of FIC are listed below:

- Urinary calculi or bladder stones (approximately 20% of all cases in cats under age 10).
- Urethral plugs - blockage of urethra with a mixture of crystals / stones and mucous
- Anatomical abnormalities - especially in younger cats with chronic or persistent urinary tract issues.
- Bacterial infections (rare in cats, although secondary infections can occur as complicating factors) are more common in cats over 10 years of age. Many older cats will have both bladder stones and a bacterial infection present.
- Neoplasia - bladder or lower urinary tract tumor.



Bladder stones, urethral plugs and bladder bacterial infections are three potential causes of FLUTD that your veterinarian will investigate.

### How is FIC diagnosed and treated?

The initial diagnosis of FIC is based on the identification of signs of lower urinary tract inflammation. The clinical signs displayed by the cat are often characteristic of FIC. A urinalysis will confirm the presence of inflammation or infection.

### What further tests are required to diagnose the cause of FIC?

When clinical signs are persistent or recurrent, a number of tests may be required to differentiate idiopathic FIC from the other known causes of urinary tract inflammation. These diagnostic tests include: Radiographs (X-rays) and/or ultrasound examination of the bladder and urethra.

Laboratory analysis of a urine sample.

Bacterial culture of a urine sample.

Blood samples to look for other evidence of urinary tract disease or other systemic disease such as kidney disease.

### What is the treatment for FIC?

Initially, a cat with uncomplicated FIC may be treated symptomatically with anti-inflammatories, pain medications, and possibly dietary modification. However, if the symptoms do not respond to this treatment or if there is recurrence of the clinical signs, additional diagnostic tests may be required to identify the underlying cause of the FIC.

Recurrent or complicated FIC treatment depends on the underlying cause. For example:

- Bacterial infections of the lower urinary tract usually respond well to antibiotic therapy.
- If a cat develops a blocked urethra, emergency treatment is required to remove the blockage. Usually the cat will be given a short-acting general anesthetic and the urethra will be flushed or catheterized. Urethral obstruction occurs almost exclusively in male cats.
- If bladder stones or uroliths are present, they will have to be removed. Depending on their type, they may be able to be dissolved by using a special diet or dietary additive, or they may require surgical removal.
- There is no universal treatment for FIC. Each case has to be investigated to determine the underlying cause, and then the treatment has to be tailored to the individual cat. Sometimes despite appropriate tests and treatment, clinical signs may still recur, requiring further therapy and diagnostic testing.

### How can FIC be prevented?

It is impossible to completely prevent diseases of the lower urinary tract from occurring. However, FIC is more common in cats that have low water consumption and in cats that are inactive and obese. All these factors may relate, at least in part, to the frequency with which a cat urinates. Weight control and encouraging exercise and water consumption may be of some help in preventing FIC. If urinary calculi or crystals caused the symptoms of FIC, the feeding of special diets may help prevent recurrence.



FIC is also more common during periods of stress (environment changes, social stress from other cats or dogs, new people in the house, etc.). You can try to mitigate these stressors by some environmental enrichment:

- Creating a Safe Place: a retreat where the cat feels safe and protected to observe its surroundings (tall perch, enclosed bed or box, solitude)
- Non-Competitive Access to Resources: separate litter box, food, water, and sleeping areas from other animals so your cat may have access without facing confrontation from other animals
- Physical & Mental Stimulation: ability to play and demonstrate instinctual hunting behaviors
- Stable and Positive Human Interactions: Minimize human stressors or unpredictable interactions (children, loud noises, rough-handling) and encourage consistent affection based on your cat's personal level of social needs.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to help in the care of your pet. Please call if you have any questions or concerns.

**For after hours emergencies, contact the East Texas Pet Emergency Clinic at (903) 759-8545. They are located at 812 Gilmer Rd., Longview, TX 75604.**