

Blocked Bladder in Cats

Overview

Having a blocked bladder (being unable to urinate) is an emergency and can cause death if left untreated. **Contact your vet for an emergency appointment** if your cat is struggling to urinate. A blocked bladder is often caused by an underlying problem such as stress, inflammation, infection or bladder stones. Your cat will need admitting into the veterinary hospital for treatment. Lifelong care will be necessary to reduce the chance of another blockage.

Blocked bladders are most common in:

- Males
- Neutered
- Overweight
- Stressed
- Dry diet

What is a blocked bladder?

A blocked bladder means that your cat can't urinate. This leads to urine building up inside the bladder until it reaches bursting point.

A blocked bladder is **extremely serious** and left untreated it can cause:

- Kidney damage
- Heart problems
- Burst bladder – causing peritonitis and in some instances death

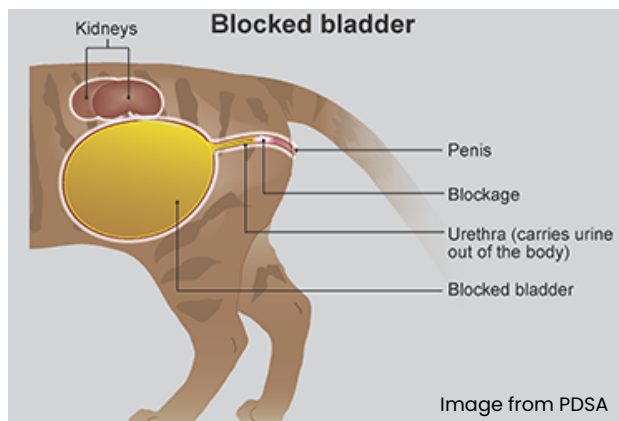
A blocked bladder can be caused by:

- Feline idiopathic cystitis (FIC) – this is very common
- Crystals in the urine
- Bladder stones
- Bladder infections (cystitis)
- Bladder tumours
- A narrow urethra

Female cats very rarely develop blocked bladders, but this may occur. Male cats are more likely to develop the condition because their urethra (the tube that drains urine from the bladder) is much longer, narrower and prone to blockage.

Symptoms

You may notice your cat struggling to urinate, or showing signs of a urine infection before they develop a blocked bladder. **Urgent treatment is required if you notice these symptoms.**

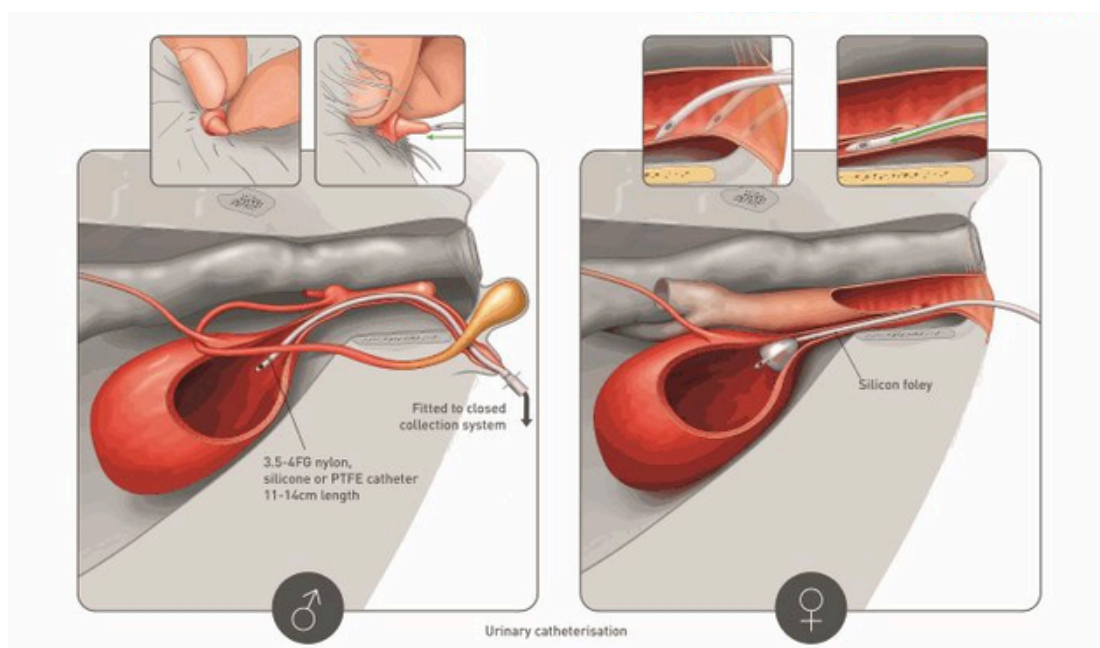


A blocked bladder may cause the following symptoms:

- Frequent visits to the litter tray producing little or no urine
- Straining to urinate (as if they are constipated)
- Crying out when trying to urinate
- Excessive licking around their back end
- Blood in their urine
- Eating less or off food completely
- A painful, tense tummy
- Vomiting
- Hiding away
- Low energy or weakness

Treatment

If your cat has a blocked bladder, they will need intensive care in a veterinary hospital until they're out of danger and their bladder is working again – this can take a few days. Your cat will need its bladder unblocked (under anaesthetic), a fluid drip and investigations to find out what has caused the problem. It is possible to unblock most bladders by putting a thin tube into the penis and allowing the urine to drain out. Your vet will then use a variety of drugs and fluids to treat any infection, crystals, spasms or pain.



Some cats may require surgery if:

- if a large stone is blocking the tube and needs removing
- if the urethra (tube that drains urine from the bladder) is too narrow
- some blockages aren't easy to treat, such as large tumours.

Care after a blockage

After your cat has blocked once, there is a chance they will block again. To prevent this, you will need to follow your vet's advice and make some changes to your cat's lifestyle and diet.

These changes may include:

- Feeding a special food (for life)
- Encouraging them to drink more
- Reducing daily stress levels
- Weight loss (if overweight)
- Medication to treat infection, pain, spasm or crystals.

It is very important to keep monitoring your cat's toileting habits if they have suffered a blocked bladder in the past. Your vet may ask you to collect a urine sample from your cat and bring it to check-up appointments.

Preventing Male Cat Urinary Blockage

Unfortunately, once a male cat has a urinary blockage, there's a higher risk of it happening again. At the first sign of urinary issues, you should have a conversation with your vet about selecting proper nutrition to support your cat's urinary health, to reduce the risk of recurring issues. In highly recurrent cases it's also possible for your vet to suggest a cat urethrostomy – a surgery that creates an opening in the urethra above the blockage to allow for normal urine drainage.

Water consumption is an important part of flushing debris from your cat's system and preventing blockage.

You can increase their water consumption by:

- Offering them water from a drinking fountain instead of a bowl
- Flavouring a second water bowl with some tuna juice
- Switching them to wet food if they currently eat dry food

Nutrition can also play an important role in preventing blockage. If your cat already experiences urinary health issues, your vet may recommend a therapeutic cat food to help dissolve crystals. This food is only available through your vet. Ask your vet if a Prescription Diet cat food might be right for your cat.

Another major factor in feline lower urinary tract disease (FLUTD) related conditions is **stress**. It is important to consider your cat's stress level when evaluating urinary issues. Cats are susceptible to stress-related lower urinary disorders, including cystitis and urethral spasms, which can result in blockage. Reducing a cat's stress may lower their chance of lower urinary tract diseases, including urethral blockage.

Your cat could be stressed if:

- They are bored
- The household has too many cats and they have to compete for resources (i.e. alone time at the litter box or competing for food and water)
- Other cats bully them
- Their litter box is dirty
- Changes in the home such as visitors, moving furniture or renovating

If your cat is having issues with urinary blockage, consider whether there's anything that could be causing them stress, and then try to eliminate those stressors.

Here are a few tips on how to eliminate stress for your cat:

- Provide your cat with plenty of toys to engage them
- Make sure to keep at least one more litter box in the home than you have cats, so they can have some privacy to do their business. Make sure to separate these litter boxes throughout the house and clean the litter boxes daily
- Make sure to have one bowl per cat. Think about it: do you want to share a plate with someone else?
- Provide your cat with a cat perch or condo. Cats love to be up high where they can see things and it gives them the privacy they want



Outlook

Despite being a serious condition, the outlook for many cats with a blocked bladder is good if they receive treatment quickly and measures are taken to stop them from blocking again. A cat that doesn't receive treatment in time is likely to die from a blocked bladder.

Cost

Treatment for a cat with a blocked bladder can become very expensive, especially if they are prone to the condition. Consider insuring your cat as soon as you get them before any signs of illness start. This will ensure you have all the support you need to care for them. It is also very important to speak openly to your vet about your finances, the cost of treatment, as well as what you think is right for your cat. There are often several treatment options, so if one doesn't work for you and your cat, then your vet may be able to offer another.

If you have any further questions, please contact your vet.