

Cat With Breast Cancer Has Constipation

CatChannel veterinary expert Arnold Plotnick, DVM, offers advice on some of the best ways to treat constipation in cats.

By Arnold Plotnick, DVM

Posted: July 17, 2009, 3 a.m. EDT

Q: I have a 15-year-old cat that has breast cancer. She has always had a hard time voiding stools. I give her Benefiber every day. She also receives ES Clear twice a day to help with the breast lumps. I decided against surgery as the lumps are large. I did not want to put her through the agony of surgery only to have her die. I have been through this before with several of my other cats. I took her to my vet the other day when she was straining to go the bathroom and vomiting. He put her on Docusate (DSS) and Cisapride. She seems to feel sick when I give this to her and does not eat very much. Other than the Benefiber, what can I give her for the stool problem? I am hoping that there is something that will help her without making her sick or lose her appetite. Thanks for any help you can give me.

A: I am sorry to hear about your cat's mammary cancer. Mammary cancer in cats is more serious than in dogs. In dogs, 50 percent of mammary tumors are malignant. In cats, 85 percent are malignant. Have your cat checked frequently by your veterinarian. These tumors can grow to a point where they can ulcerate and get infected. Also, if the tumor spreads to the lungs, your cat may show signs of respiratory discomfort, such as coughing or labored breathing. ES Clear is an alternative/holistic medication that I am unfamiliar with and have no personal experience with.

As for your cat's constipation problems, I do not prescribe the stool softener DSS to cats. It is a horrible-tasting medication that cats find really offensive. Constipation problems are often treated using a three-pronged approach: diet, stool softeners and motility drugs. High-fiber diets have traditionally been prescribed for cats with constipation. If your cat is not on a high-fiber diet (or will not eat one), you can supplement the food with fiber, which is what you are doing with the Benefiber.

Many vets (myself included), however, are finding better success using a highly digestible diet instead, such as Iams Low Residue formula, or Hill's Prescription Diet i/d. As for stool softeners, I think lactulose works very well, and I would ask your veterinarian to prescribe this instead of the DSS. Cisapride is a drug that causes the colon to contract. This helps the colon expel the stool that accumulates in there. Hopefully, the combination of a highly digestible diet, new stool softener (lactulose), and continued use of Cisapride will help control your cat's constipation problem.