

## Straining to Urinate

**Find out what a vet recommends for a cat who is straining to urinate.**

*Elaine Wexler-Mitchell, D.V.M.*

Q. What should I do if my cat is straining to urinate?

Elaine Wexler-Mitchell, D.V.M., says: Straining is one sign of a urinary blockage in a male cat a potentially life threatening condition. First you should check to see if your cat is passing urine. Cats only slightly differ their postures when urinating and defecating so owners easily confuse constipated cats with those straining to urinate. If a male cat is straining and not passing urine, a veterinarian should examine him immediately. Straining occurs when infection or irritating materials inflame a cats bladder or urethra. If you notice your cat straining and blood is present in the urine, this is a sign of lower urinary tract disease (LUTD). Regardless of the cause of straining, your cat is in discomfort and should receive medical attention.

After an examination to determine if a blockage is present, a veterinarian will perform a urinalysis. This test shows whether bacteria, crystals, or inflammation are responsible for the straining. Bacterial infections are actually the least common of the three. There are different types of crystals and stones that can develop in the urinary tract and cause blockage or irritation. Diet has a large impact on crystal formation within the urine. Canned diets are better for cats who develop crystals or benign bladder inflammation because they lead to the production of larger volumes of more dilute urine that flushes the bladder. The decision to feed a cat a diet specially formulated for urinary tract disease should be made after consulting your veterinarian. Do not feed a cat any special diet without consulting an expert.

Inflammation without crystals or bacteria can also cause straining. A benign, inflammatory condition of the bladder, called interstitial cystitis, occurs in some cats. Stress can trigger this condition, but most often a specific cause is not identified.

If a cat has recurrent bouts of LUTD or straining, further tests such as a urine culture, X ray, or ultrasound are needed to determine the cause. Specific management of the condition is based on the cause but may include special diet and medications that relieve pain and calm the lining of the bladder.

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