

Diabetes

What is feline diabetes?

An average of 8 cats on 50 will be diagnosed in a clinic as suffering from feline diabetes.

Diabetes mellitus is caused by an insufficient quantity of insulin available in your cat's organism, either because the production of insulin by the pancreas is too low or inexistent either because of the incapacity of your pet's cells to respond to the produced insulin. It is also possible that both causes are responsible for your cat's diabetes.

Characteristic signs of feline diabetes

- ✓ Thirst increase
- ✓ Excessive micturition and/or inappropriate micturition in the house
- ✓ Appetite increase
- ✓ Weight loss
- ✓ Lethargy and weakness in back legs
- ✓ Deterioration in your cat's coat or general condition
- ✓ Decrease resistance to infection, particularly in the urinary tract

The exact causes of diabetes mellitus in cats are still unknown. However, genetics, obesity, pancreas disease, hormonal imbalance as well as some medication like corticosteroids are factors that can possibly play a role in developing diabetes.

Early diagnosis as a prevention tool remains to best treatment for your animal's health.

Diagnosing diabetes mellitus

If you think or present a genetic predisposition to develop the disease, consult your veterinarian so he can do a general exam and a general health checkup to make sure your cat doesn't suffer from any other disease or infection.

Complications:

Long term complications related to diabetes are the result of a high glucose level in the blood for a prolonged time.

The most frequent complication of feline diabetes is neuropathy, a weakness in the back legs. Although there is no specific treatment for neuropathy that exist, an effective control of the blood sugar can help prevent neuropathy, reduce the severity or even delay the appearance of the disease.

If it is not treated feline diabetes can damage the kidneys, cause recurrent infections and even lead to death.

A diabetes diagnosis can be very scary. It is important, though, to see things in perspective. Even if it is a disease that must be taken seriously, cats suffering from diabetes can benefit from a good life quality and so, for many years. An early diagnosis and an appropriate treatment are essential to stop the effects of diabetes mellitus and prevent the development of other complications.

Treatment

With the help of insulin and an appropriate diet, you should be able to control successfully your cat's diabetes.

Most cats suffering from diabetes mellitus will need to be treated by insulin injections twice a day. The veterinarian will determine the adequate dose for your animal and teach you everything you must know about the injection and the control of blood sugar levels in your cat.

Hyperglycemia indicates a **high** blood sugar level.

Hypoglycemia indicates a **low** blood sugar level.

Depending in the glucose level in the blood and urine of your cat, as well as the clinical signs he will show, the veterinarian will adjust the needed insulin doses until an adequate dose is established.

Most cats will need to be treated with insulin for the rest of their life. However, some diabetic cats will not need insulin anymore after a couple of weeks or months of treatment. We commonly call this clinical remission.

These cats have, in their pancreas, cells that still work. When problems related to abnormally high glycemic level are treated by insulin injections, the pancreatic cells of these cats are able again to produce themselves sufficient quantities of insulin.

However, do not confuse remission and curing. Your cat's diet and lifestyle will have to be followed carefully to delay the return of clinical diabetes.

Living with a diabetic cat

Following a regular routine as recommended by your veterinarian is the key to managing diabetes in an efficient way.

Monitor your animal's blood sugar level

It is possible that your veterinarian invites you to monitor clinical signs as well as the concentration of glucose present in your cat's urine or blood samples with a portable glucometer. The results will help your veterinarian to give the adequate dose of insulin.

The coherence and regularity with which you will manage your cat's diabetes is of the very first importance. Meals and medication must be given on a regular schedule. Be sure to always have a sufficient amount of food and medication to avoid skipping a meal or substituting a meal.

Nutrition and diet

A low carbohydrate and high in protein diet is preferable. Ideally, more than 40% of calories in your diabetic cat's diet should come from carbohydrates and less than 25% should come from fat. Easy to digest quality proteins, like the ones we find in chicken or lamb are preferable to the proteins found in cereals like soy or corn gluten.

Your cat should always have access to safe drinking water.

Physical exercise

Start exercises slowly during short periods. If your cat does not seem to want to take part in activities, do not insist.

Treating successfully feline diabetes is very rewarding. This way you can, with your veterinarian's help, have your cat regain a good health and so, for many years to come.

For more information, you can visit the following websites: cat-dog-diabetes.com et caninsulin.ca