

How to Prevent the Most Common Cat Conditions

10 December 10, 2014 Dr. Debra Primovic - DVM



What are the most common medication conditions of cats? After we published that article we got dozens of emails saying “Okay, you told me what the common conditions are— how can I prevent them?”

Thank you so much for bringing up this excellent point. We researched ways to protect your pet against developing the conditions mentioned and what to share that information with you. Some conditions are preventable and some aren’t, but every little bit of precaution helps. Below are tips on how to avoid the conditions which are considered preventable.

1. **Renal Disease** – Kidney affects cats of all ages and breeds, although older pets are more frequently affected. Common signs of renal disease include weight loss, increase in water intake and urination, and vomiting. There is not a lot you can do to prevent this condition but you can ensure your cat always has plenty of fresh clean water.

2. **Vomiting** – This very common condition can be caused by many different things – some of which are preventable and others which are not. You can prevent this condition in some cats by not feeding table food, making any food change gradually, and preventing your cat from eating undigestible items such as string, yarn, or fabric.

3. **Diabetes** – Overweight and older cats are especially susceptible to this chronic condition in which a deficiency of the hormone insulin impairs the body’s ability to metabolize sugar. Common signs include vomiting, weight loss, lethargy and increased thirst. Things you can do to prevent diabetes is monitoring your cat’s weight and not allowing them to become obese. Avoid medications such as glucocorticoids and progestagens that antagonize insulin.

4. **Diarrhea** – Almost all cat owners are familiar with this condition characterized by loose, watery stool. The most common causes are the ingestion of table scraps and spoiled food, excess plant material, and a sudden change in food. You can prevent diarrhea in cats by feeding only high quality cat food and making any food changes gradually.

5. **Upper Respiratory Infection** – A single condition is often the result of several different diseases affecting the nose, throat and sinus area. Cats at increased risk include those in catteries, from rescue shelters and in-outdoor feral cat populations. These viruses are easily killed by household cleaners such as bleach. You can prevent this by keeping your cat vaccinated and preventing exposure to high stress situations such as boarding facilities.

6. **Hyperthyroidism** – This disease is caused by an excess of the hormone produced by the thyroid gland. There is no recognized breed or sex predilection for this disease and nothing you can really do to prevent it.

7. **Urinary Tract Infection** – This is one of the most common reasons for cats visiting the vet. Factors that may play a role in the development of these urinary bladder infections include viruses, the type of diet fed (especially dry food diets with high mineral content), stress, confinement to a strictly indoor environment, and genetic factors. Make sure your cat has plenty of fresh clean water and a clean litter box that they feel comfortable using.

8. **Pancreatitis** – A relatively serious condition, pancreatitis results from sudden inflammation of the pancreas and is characterized by activation of pancreatic enzymes which can cause the pancreas to begin digesting itself. The cause of acute pancreatitis is poorly understood. Predisposing causes include obesity, high fat diet, liver disease, infection and recent abdominal surgery.

9. **Ear Infection** – The diagnosis of an ear infection is characterized by inflammation of the soft tissue components of the external ear canal. It can be caused by viruses, bacteria as well as ear mites which are contagious from other infected cats.

10. **Conjunctivitis** – Finally, conjunctivitis is an inflammation of the conjunctiva, which is the tissue coating the eye and lining the eyelids. There isn't much you can do to prevent conjunctivitis. However, you can reduce the likelihood of your cat's eyes becoming irritated by preventing things from blowing in your cat's eyes. If you use spray cleaners, paints or other aerosols that may irritate the sensitive eye tissue, remove your cat from the area until they are out of the air.

If you notice any of the symptoms mentioned above in your cat, please see your veterinarian.