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Urinary Problems Part 2- Cystitis

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Welcome back. This is the second installment of our Urinary series. Our previous installment dealt with Urethral Plugs in felines (Blocked Tom Cats). A copy of it can be found in our archived newsletters [here](#). Today we are discussing the most common form of Urinary issue brought in to see us...Cystitis.

What is Cystitis? What are signs of it?

Cystitis means inflammation in the bladder. This inflammation makes the pet uncomfortable, and they feel like they have to go RIGHT NOW. This often leads to the most common sign of cystitis: urinary accidents. The "right now" feeling means the pet does not think it can make it to the backyard or the litterbox, thus the first thing the owner notices is the pet urinating on the carpet, bed, floor, or any other inappropriate spot. The pets are usually well house trained, and these "accidents" are out of character. Also, the urine may have blood in it.

Often these Pets are eating and acting normal, but if the inflammation is severe enough, it can make the pet feel painful in the abdomen. They can also act lethargic, and drink an increased amount of water.

What causes cystitis?

The cause of cystitis differs in dogs and cats.

Dogs- The most common cause of cystitis in dogs is bacterial infection of the bladder. This can be caused bacteria migrating up the urinary tract, secondary to stones knocking around in the bladder, holding the urine too long, or infections elsewhere (prostate, kidney, uterus, etc). Bladder infections secondary to other diseases like Diabetes and Cushing's are very common. Other causes of inflammation are the aforementioned bladder stones (to be addressed next issue), and a condition known as sterile cystitis (no bacteria or stones).

Cats- The cause of cystitis in cats varies depending on their age. Older cats (8+ years) tend to have bacterial cystitis similar to dogs. Younger cats tend to have sterile cystitis (no bacterial cause). This condition has many names, such as FLUTD (Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease) and can be a recurring problem, often brought on by stress. We will discuss this syndrome in detail next issue (and we promise it is coming out next month).

How is cystitis diagnosed?

By examining the urine of the pet. If you suspect a bladder infection, you may collect a fresh urine sample at home, or bring in your pet to see us and we will collect it. It is helpful that if you think your dog has a bladder infection, **do not walk them before bringing them in** so that there is urine for us to collect. Sometimes it is necessary to leave your pet with us for the day so we may allow the urine to build up in the bladder, then collect it.

How is cystitis treated?

For the majority of cases of cystitis, antibiotics are the treatment of choice. This treats any infection, as well as soothes the bladder. If there are underlying causes (stones, other diseases), then those need to be treated as well. If the infection is in the kidneys (which can often present as a urinary tract infection), then the antibiotics will need to be given for a longer duration. In cats with FLUTD, environmental changes will often be recommended. These can include adding extra litterboxes, cleaning the box more frequently, etc. We will go in depth into FLUTD next month.

Should the antibiotics not work, that is when we start looking deeper into the cause of the problem. Often this can involve radiographs, culture and sensitivity testing (checking to see if the urine has a resistant bacteria), or ultrasound of the bladder. These tests will look for bladder stones, cancer, resistant bacteria, and other causes of urinary issues apart from cystitis. Because of this, bringing your pet back in for timely rechecks is important.

Can I prevent Cystitis?

Cystitis can be hard to prevent. Some causes are genetic (trouble fully emptying bladder, etc). Others caused by chronic conditions (diabetes) recur regularly. But there are some things you can do. Make sure your pet drinks plenty of water. In chronic conditions, canned food can help. There are also some prescription diets that can help reduce inflammation, prevent stones, etc. The diets are especially helpful in cats. Making sure your pet has access to go outside or to the litterbox to urinate as often as possible so that they don't have to hold it for 10 hours straight will help as well. It is also important (especially in cats) to bring them in at the onset of signs and not wait a month to see if it goes away. If you wait too long, urinating in inappropriate places can become a habit, and can be very hard to break.

In general, cystitis and bladder infections are very common. With proper treatment, most pets can get over them easily.