

Feline Diabetes

Diabetes is a very common hormonal disorder of cats. Approximately 1 in 100 to 200 cats will develop Diabetes Mellitus in their lifetime. In cats, long standing hyperglycaemia (high blood sugar) causes decrease in insulin secretion due to damage to the beta cells of the pancreas.

Simply put, Diabetes Mellitus is a failure of the pancreatic beta cells to produce insulin which is required to regulate blood sugar. Insulin allows cells to use glucose as energy. When insulin is deficient, the body becomes starved for a source of energy, so it breaks down fat and protein stores to use as alternative energy sources. As a consequence, the cat eats more, therefore we have weight loss in a cat with a ravenous appetite. The body tries to eliminate the excess glucose in the blood by excreting it in the urine. However, glucose attracts water resulting in the production of a large amount of urine. To avoid dehydration, the cat drinks more and more water.

There is no cure for Diabetes Mellitus. However, some diabetic cats may lose the need for insulin, months or years after diagnosis. Once control is attained with proper treatment and home care, a diabetic cat can live many healthy years.

Insulin

Most diabetic cats require insulin injections administered under their skin twice daily. The injections can be given at home, preferably at the same time each day. Your veterinarian will show you how to give these injections. The proper type of insulin, dose, and frequency of administration needs to be determined by your veterinarian. This is based on a blood glucose profile, obtained through a veterinarian-administered insulin injection and subsequent testing of blood sugar levels at regular intervals throughout the day. Insulin dosage may change with time and may need to be adjusted based on new blood glucose profiles, the results of intermittent blood tests and urine sugar measurements, and your cat's response to therapy.

Diet

The feeding routine is important and in addition to medication, an important step in treating diabetes is to alter your cat's diet. Ideally, a cat receiving insulin should be fed half its daily food requirement shortly before each injection. Diets high in fibre and slower digestion times like Hills M/D or Royal Canin Diabetic Control would be ideal.

It is important to feed a consistent amount and type of food at the same times each day [12 hourly intervals], so that you can be aware of days that your cat either does not eat or is unusually hungry after the feeding. Additionally, since water consumption is highly variable from one cat to another, monitoring your cat's water consumption for a few weeks will allow you to establish what is normal for your cat.

Successfully managing a diabetic cat requires much dedication and communication between you and your veterinarian. The personal commitment to treating a diabetic cat is significant and we will work with you to try and achieve consistent regulation. Because your cat's insulin requirements may change over time, regular checking of blood glucose or serum Fructosamine levels is essential.

As well as coming in for all scheduled rechecks, please call us at the first reappearance of diabetes signs (increased thirst, increased weight loss, increased appetite, or increased urination).

Always have glucose or honey in the house in case you are instructed to give this in an emergency.

Please also call the vet clinic immediately if your pet doesn't eat, is wandering aimlessly, confused, or weak.

Diabetes Management Plan

Diet:

Food should be given twice a day at 12 hourly intervals and insulin should be administered shortly after food.

Meals and insulin given at the SAME time every day but not simultaneously

i.e Breakfast at 7am followed by insulin at 7.30am. Dinner at 7pm followed by insulin at 7.30pm

Meal quantity and insulin amount MUST the SAME every day.

Insulin:

_____iu given at _____ am and _____ pm each day.

Remember to store the insulin in the fridge.

Exercise:

Important to have the SAME amount of exercise every day

Recheck and blood test is due every 6 months (once controlled):

Important points for care of a diabetes patient:

- Always have glucose or honey in the house in case you are instructed to give this
- Don't keep insulin in the fridge door, keep in it on the fridge shelf
- Insulin syringes vary depending on the type of insulin they are intended to be used for.
- Only use syringes provided to you by your veterinarian
- One person should be responsible for the administration of insulin to avoid accidental 'double dosing'