

YOUR CAT IS BLOCKED

Urinary blockage in the male cat is an extremely serious condition. If cats are left untreated they will die in 1-2 days. This paper has been written by the Doctors of the All Animal Clinic to help you to understand the problem and its treatment.

What is urinary blockage?

Urinary blockage is a condition in which the normal flow of urine from the urinary bladder through the urethra is blocked. Most commonly this blockage occurs at or near the tip of the penis. The blockage is created by crystals which form in the urine and then become lodged near the end of the urinary tract.

What causes these crystals to form?

There are lots of theories as to the cause but no single reason has yet been proved. The old theory that it was caused by early castration is no longer believed by Veterinarians. In fact some of the worst cases are seen in uncastrated tom cats. Many different causes are suspected - viruses, bacteria, diet, diminished water intake, infrequent urination, stress and even infections which start elsewhere in the body and travel to the urinary system.

What are the signs of urinary blockage?

Sitting in the litter and straining to urinate is the typical sign. If the cat is partly obstructed, the urine is usually blood-tinged. There is an increased desire to urinate, frequent trips to the litter box, but very little urine is actually passed. Symptoms look rather like constipation and the abdomen (belly) becomes very swollen and hard; frequently the animal will strain and howl in pain. As the blockage continues vomiting may result. This is due to the poison (urea) which is accumulating in the blood. Cats soon become exhausted and may collapse. Immediate help should be sought because at this stage death may occur within hours.

How is this condition treated?

The main goal of treatment is to relieve the blockage and prevent recurrence. Both are difficult tasks to perform. One method of relieving the blockage is to pass a plastic tube (catheter) into the tip of the penis and try to flush out the crystals. If this is not possible then the crystals are flushed back into the urinary bladder. The catheter may be sewn in place for several days, after which time it is removed and the animal may be sent home with medication that must be given daily. Unfortunately, many of these animals re-block at a later date.

Surgery is the best method of successfully relieving the blockage as well as preventing recurrence. Since the problem is basically due to the narrowness of the urethra within the penis, the entire penis is removed surgically. A technique has been devised in which the penis is removed and the remaining urethra is stitched open to create a hole (urethrostomy) with a much larger opening than that of a normal penis. Urine and crystals can pass out easily. There are thousands of cats which have had a urethrostomy procedure performed and they are leading normal, active lives. Because of the pioneer work done at the All Animal Clinic, the procedure is known across the country as the Cleveland Technique.

What are the risks involved?

There are risks involved because the cat is very ill. However, due to the use of modern equipment and anesthesia, the Doctor can control the level of anesthesia very precisely. As mentioned previously, if nothing is done, most cats will die. Thus, in the face of impending death, we feel we must take the risk of anesthesia.

What is the success rate of the surgery?

At the All Animal Clinic, we have had a success rate of over ninety percent with the urethrostomy.

What is the cost?

This may vary with the individual cat, depending upon the duration of blockage, age, difficulty of surgery and many other factors. The Doctor will discuss the cost with you.

REMEMBER.....this is an emergency of the highest order. Fast action is essential to save your pet's life!

