

My cat has diabetes— now what?



With proper care, this common disease is actually quite manageable and cats can maintain a good quality of life. Here's what you need to know.

What is it?

Diabetes mellitus is a condition that develops when the body doesn't produce enough insulin or the insulin that is produced isn't sufficient enough to regulate blood sugar levels. As a result, the body doesn't function as well as it should.

What are the clinical signs?

Cats with diabetes tend to drink a lot of water, urinate frequently and in greater volumes, have a ravenous appetite and, despite the fact that they're eating more, can often lose weight. In some cats, if the disease isn't diagnosed soon enough, a serious condition known as ketoacidosis can develop and vomiting, diarrhea, dehydration, lethargy and anorexia can occur.

How is it diagnosed?

The good news is that diabetes is easy and relatively inexpensive to diagnose. With a simple blood and urine test, your veterinarian

can determine whether there's an elevated amount of sugar in your cat's body.

How is it treated?

With prompt and correct treatment, many cats will go into remission and no longer be diabetic. To do this, your veterinarian will make recommendations about a proper diet and feeding regimen and start your cat on insulin therapy twice a day.

What about follow-up monitoring?

After about a week of insulin therapy at home, your veterinarian will want to perform a glucose curve. This can be performed at the clinic or your veterinarian may also speak to you about monitoring your cat's blood sugar levels at home to reduce the stress of going to the veterinary hospital. Over the course of the day, the veterinary team or you will take

blood samples to test your cat's blood sugar levels. Your pet's dose of insulin may need to be adjusted, depending on these results. Because many cats can go into remission, your veterinarian may take a more aggressive approach initially to try to return your cat's blood sugar to a normal level and prevent lifelong treatment.

What is the prognosis for my pet?

Almost 80 percent of cats go into remission with aggressive therapy immediately following diagnosis. Those that don't go into remission do very well and have a good quality of life with treatment. Cats don't get diabetes-induced cataracts like dogs, so the goal with treatment is to obtain remission and/or keep the clinical signs of disease under control.

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