

Diabetes Mellitus

Diabetes occurs when there is an excess of glucose in the bloodstream. This is a common disease of older cats. Any age, breed, or sex can be affected, but overweight male cats have a higher predisposition for the disease. Steroid use can also be a cause.

Signs of diabetes include increased water intake, excessive amount of urine produced, an increased appetite, weight loss, lethargy, weakness, and a poor hair coat.

There are two types of diabetes. Type I (insulin dependent) occurs when the pancreas does not produce enough insulin. Type II occurs when the body produces enough insulin, but there is a resistance to it. There are no tests to distinguish between these two types. Transient diabetes can also occur, this is not a permanent disease.

Type I diabetes is more common and requires daily insulin administration for the remainder of the cat's life. Generally the injections need to be twice daily. Type II diabetes may or may not require daily insulin. Some cats can be managed on a prescription diabetic diet or oral medications. Some type II cats will spontaneously reverse.

Diagnosis is made through various blood and urine tests. Treatments vary by the cat's response to different drugs and food. At home glucose testing can be an important tool in regulating response to treatment.

Keeping your cat a healthy weight is one way to help prevent diabetes and may be enough to treat or cause remission of the disease. Weight loss needs to be done very gradually.

Undiagnosed diabetes has the potential to be life threatening when glucose concentrations become significantly elevated.

*** Ensuring there is plenty of fresh water available is important to prevent dehydration. ***



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