

Diabetes Mellitus in Cats

What is diabetes?

Blood sugar is normally used as energy by cells all around the body. Insulin (produced by the pancreas) is the hormone that feeds blood sugar into cells.

If a cat develops diabetes, their cells cant take sugar in and become starved of energy. The pancreas continues to produce more and more insulin, until eventually, it becomes exhausted and stops working. Cells around the body continue to starve, blood sugar levels rise abnormally high and the symptoms of diabetes develop.

Being obese increases a cat's risk of developing diabetes, but other diseases (pancreatitis) and certain medicines can also cause it. Most cats get Type-2 diabetes, which many people understand as a condition that doesn't need insulin injections. However, type two diabetes in cats is slightly different and can be treated with insulin and a well controlled diet.

If a cat with diabetes is treated quickly, they have a good chance of improving enough to come off insulin injections, and be managed with diet alone. Keeping your cat slim and controlling what they eat is necessary for good diabetes management.



What are the symptoms?

The first symptoms of diabetes in dogs tend to include:

- Increased thirst
- Urinating more
- Weight loss
- Lethargy
- Fur changes
- More common in Burmese

How can we diagnose Diabetes?

It is very simple to diagnose Diabetes. Usually a blood test and urine sample can be confirmative. If you are suspicious your cat may have Diabetes then collecting a fresh urine sample for us to test is very helpful.

How can we treat Diabetes?

Diabetes is a condition that needs lifelong treatment and a lot of commitment, especially in the early stages as your dog is stabilised. However, once treatment has started, your dog is likely to start to feel much better within a week or two.

Treating diabetes includes:

- Insulin injections:
 - There are different types of insulin available for cats.
 - Some are injected twice daily every 12 hours.
 - There is a very new product that is once daily and can be given orally rather than via injections
 - Speak to the vet to see which treatment option would be most suited for you and your cat.
- Diet control:
 - Controlling what your diabetic cat eats is a very important part of their treatment. The best food for your diabetic cat is a wet food that is high in protein and low in carbohydrate. Your vet will be able to advise you which food to choose. Cats need regular, small meals throughout the day and portion control is important to make sure they don't become overweight.



Diabetic Ketoacidosis

If your cat's diabetes isn't controlled, they may develop a condition called 'ketoacidosis'. If your cat develops ketoacidosis, they will become very poorly and need admitting to the veterinary hospital. Your vet will give them intensive treatment until they are well enough to come home. Ketoacidosis is a serious condition that often takes several days to recover from, it can lead to death if it's not treated quickly.

What happens if their blood sugars go too low (hypoglycaemia)?

Having low blood sugar is known as a 'hypo'. This can happen if they have had too much insulin or not enough food. This is an emergency and should be treated as soon as possible.

Some of the signs to watch out for include:

- Vomiting
- Wobbly
- Spaced out or vacant
- Seizures
- Collapse

If this occurs it is important you get something into them that is sugary quickly. We suggest rubbing honey or jam onto their gums and contacting us immediately.

How do we monitor Diabetic patients?

We will need to see your dog for regular blood sugar and urine test at the beginning until we get them stabilised. We also may suggest to have your pet in the clinic for the day so we can monitor there blood sugar levels every 2 hours to get their dosage of insulin correct.

It is possible that cats can recover from their Diabetes and only need diet control rather than insulin. Keeping them slim and active gives you the best chance of them recovering.

To book in for your cat in for a health check or testing, please call us on 01423 228080 or visit www.clarohillvets.co.uk.