



Management of the Diabetic Feline

Your cat has diabetes mellitus in which he/she does not produce enough insulin to maintain normal blood sugar levels, or his/her cells are no longer sensitive to insulin. Consequently, you must provide the insulin by giving injections.

A lack of insulin results in a decreased delivery of sugar to the cells and a rise in blood sugar (hyperglycemia). As the blood sugar increases, it eventually passes into the urine. This causes an increase in urination and a subsequent increase in thirst and water consumption. Also, the cells decreased use of sugar leads to the breakdown of fat and muscle. Eventually this process leads to weight loss; thus the history of virtually all diabetics includes increased thirst, increased urination, increased appetite and weight loss.

To control these symptoms insulin must be given by injection. Most cats will require insulin twice daily, twelve hours apart, and at least two daily feedings given at the time of injection. If your cat is accustomed to eating small amounts throughout the day, or eating more than two meals, you may continue this routine. Consistency is important. Please try to maintain uniform injection and feeding times, diet and exercise. **Our feline diabetic patients are started on Lantus (Insulin Glargine) twice daily to help normalize blood sugar levels.**

Diet plays an important role in the successful management of diabetic cats. Cats are obligate carnivores and are relatively intolerant to carbohydrates unlike dogs and people. Normal cats have prolonged post meal high blood sugars when they eat a moderate to high carbohydrate diet.

Feeding a low carbohydrate diet will increase insulin effectiveness, help stabilize blood sugar metabolism and reduce or eliminate the need for insulin. Some cats will go into remission (not need insulin for a period of time); the highest remission rates (greater than 80%) have been reported feeding diets with approximately 6% of energy from carbohydrates. Please consult Binkys page (binkyspage.tripod.com/canfood.html) for information on carbohydrate content of moist cat food. If your cat refuses moist cat food you may consult catinfo.org for suggestions on introducing canned food.

Please Visit the Following Websites to Learn More:

Felinediabetes.com

Binkyspage.tripod.com/canfood.html

Catinfo.org

Indulgedfurries.com/petdiabetes/index.html

Occasional Problems Encountered

1. If you attempt to give an insulin injection and your pet gets only part of its dose due to sudden movement causing some of the insulin to be squirted onto the skin, do not attempt to approximate its dose by giving another injection. Simply wait until the next injection to give the normal amount.
2. If your pet is unable to eat after insulin is given (for example if vomiting occurs), try to administer a semi-liquid diet such as baby food. You can also try a small amount of chicken, tuna or beef. If vomiting persists, notify the hospital immediately.
3. If you find it necessary to miss an occasional insulin injection it is acceptable to do so. It is not acceptable to skip a series of injections
4. Occasionally insulin treatment may result in blood sugar levels that are too low. Your pet may seem weak and uncoordinated at times. Should this occur, offer a meal of canned food. If your cat refuses the food or is unable to eat, administer sugar-containing syrup by rubbing it on the gums and inside of the lips. Do not try to force your pet to swallow the syrup. Call the hospital if your pet does not improve within a few minutes.

Monitoring your pet at home includes: observance for a return of thirst and increased urination. Your pet should have a good, but not ravenous, appetite. Also, periodic in-hospital re-evaluation of blood glucose levels and body weight (every three months) is important.