

# Diabetes mellitus in your cat

Diabetes is a disease caused when there is not enough insulin in the body. Insulin is a hormone which keeps blood sugar (glucose) at an optimum level. When there is a lack of insulin, blood sugar levels increase.

If untreated, diabetes has a serious impact on health and will ultimately result in the death of your pet. The good news is that the majority of diabetic animals can now be treated. Many animals live normal and happy lives if you are prepared to invest time and money in their care.

## Signs

- Increased thirst
- Often lose weight despite having a good appetite
- If the condition is untreated, liver disease, problems walking or other illness may develop
- If the early signs of diabetes are missed, more serious signs such as vomiting and depression may develop
- If diabetes is left untreated for weeks or months, your cat could go into a coma and die

## Causes

Unfortunately, some cats are just more likely to develop diabetes than others. Obese cats are at a higher risk and other diseases may cause diabetes.

## Treatment

Most diabetic cats require regular insulin injections to control their blood sugar levels. Diabetes rarely goes away completely and so these injections must be given on a regular basis, usually once or twice a day, for the rest of your cat's life.

- In some obese cats, weight loss may control their diabetes for a while
- Insulin injections are given under the skin and don't hurt
- Your cat's health, weight and blood glucose will be regularly monitored

## Complications

There are two important complications to be aware of:

**Hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar)** – this usually occurs a few hours after insulin is given. If untreated, it may result in permanent brain damage. Symptoms come on quickly. The main ones are restlessness, confusion, tremors, twitches, convulsions or coma. Sugar or glucose should be given by mouth onto the gums. If your pet is still awake, you can offer glucose with food if they will eat voluntarily. Contact your vet immediately if these signs develop.

**Hyperglycaemia (high blood sugar)** – this usually develops more gradually and your pet may become unwell or start to be sick over several days. As the disease progresses your pet may go into a coma, but will not get better if you give sugar solutions. Contact your vet immediately if your pet is unwell and they will probably want to take them into hospital.



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