Bladder and kidney problems in cats.

Problems with the urinary tract in cats can cause excessive urine production or an urge to urinate frequently.

If your cat has cystitis often the first sign you will notice is that it is passing small amounts of urine very often. Sometimes you will see blood in the urine and occasionally your cat will strain as if trying to go to the toilet but nothing comes out. In these cases cystitis may be mistaken for constipation or an obstruction in the urinary tract.

A blockage in the urinary tract is more common in male cats than females. Obstruction to the urinary tract is an emergency situation so if you think your cat is straining to pee then you should contact your vet immediately.

Cats may also choose not to use a litter tray and spray or urinate in other parts of the house. This may be due to a medical problem but in many cases can be a behavioural response to stressful situations. In multi-cat households cats may avoid using a litter tray frequented by other cats and most cats will avoid a dirty tray.

If you think there may be something wrong with your cat's toileting habits then you should make an appointment to see your vet. Try to collect a fresh urine sample and take this with you when you take your cat to the vet. Your vet will be able to get a lot of information on what may be wrong with your pet from testing the urine sample.

Cystitis (bladder inflammation)

As anyone who has ever suffered with cystitis (a sore bladder) will know, it is a very unpleasant condition. Although not usually life-threatening, cystitis can be very distressing for your pet. It is important to seek veterinary advice as soon as possible since most cases can be easily treated to provide rapid relief for your pet.

Cystitis means that the lining of the bladder is inflamed. Because the bladder is sore animals with cystitis want to empty it more often and so are frequently seen squatting and trying to pass...
urine. Cystitis can also be caused by crystals forming in the bladder. These can grow into stones and cause blockages in the urethra, especially in male cats. If your cat can not pass urine at all this is an emergency and you should contact Lanes Vets as soon as possible.

What are the signs of cystitis?
The first sign you will usually notice is your cat visiting the litter tray more frequently. When using a tray they may only pass small amounts of urine and sometimes you will see blood. Occasionally your cat will strain as if trying to pass urine but nothing comes out. In these cases cystitis may be mistaken for constipation or a blockage in the urinary system. Some cats with cystitis seem restless and unsettled and others will cry when straining to urinate.

Why has my cat got cystitis?
The most common cause of cystitis in cats is stress. This can be an obvious stress, such as a new addition to the household or building work taking place, but some cats become stressed by even minor changes to their routine. Less common in cats is an infection caused by bacteria which usually gain entry to the body through the urethra (which is the tube leading from the bladder to the exterior).

There are a whole range of different problems which can make it more likely that your cat will develop cystitis due to infection. In some cases a bladder stone may have damaged the inside of the bladder. Cats which have problems emptying their bladder because they have a blockage or are unwilling to use their litter tray are also more at risk.

Sometimes there is another disease present that makes your cat less able to fight infection. Kidney disease can result in cystitis, and diabetic cats have a lot of sugar in their urine making the bladder an ideal place for bacteria to grow.

How is cystitis treated?
Your vet will be able to prescribe some drugs that help to relax the bladder and reduce the pain associated with passing urine. If your cat has a bacterial cystitis and there is no other obvious problem your vet may give you a course of antibiotics. In most cases the problem should start to clear up within a few days of starting the treatment. It is very important that you continue to give the treatment until the course is finished, even if your cat seems completely better. If you stop treatment too early the problem may come straight back and the tablets may not work a second time.

Is there anything else I can do to help?
Ensuring your cat can empty its bladder regularly will help to make them feel more comfortable.
Make sure they have access to a clean litter tray at all times. Ideally there should be one more litter tray than number of cats in the house. Encourage your cat to drink plenty of fluids as this will help to dilute the urine and make it less irritant to the bladder. Cats generally prefer to drink from ceramic or metal bowls rather than plastic and you might consider getting a drinking fountain. Cats that are prone to cystitis should be fed a moist (tinned) diet as this encourages water intake and makes the urine more dilute.

If your cat suffers from stress related cystitis you need to try to keep their lives as stress free as possible! In addition the use of a pheromone diffuser may help. Special diets are available that encourage the production of dilute urine to prevent long term recurrence of cystitis.

**Will my cat get better?**

Most cats recover very quickly from cystitis. However, if there is some other problem which has caused the cystitis then this must also be cleared up or the cystitis will come straight back. If cats have an underlying cause for the cystitis which cannot be resolved, then they may occasionally need to be on permanent medication for stress, or recurring courses of antibiotics.

**Increased water intake in cats.**

A healthy cat may take in between 20 and 90 ml of water per kg of body weight per 24 hours. This figure includes the water in food, which obviously varies according to how much dry and how much canned/pouched food the cat has. So it is not until your cat is drinking around 100 ml of water per kg body weight (for an average cat this is around 300-400ml) per day that you can be sure this is excessive.

However, most cats do not drink this much and for many a lesser intake may be significantly abnormal so if you notice any increase in the amount of water being drunk by your cat this may be the first indication of a problem and should not be ignored. Cats on dry diets will need to drink more than cats on moist food so if you have recently changed your cat’s diet this may be the reason for a change in drinking habits. If you are worried about how much your cat is drinking you might want to try to measure their actual intake.

The easiest way to do this is fill their bowl with a known volume of water using a jug and then at the end of the day measuring how much water is left. Of course, for many cats, this is difficult as they drink outside, from sources other than their bowl and often share a water bowl with other animals. To measure the water intake in these cats you might have to isolate your cat and keep her indoors for three days.

If your cat is drinking more you may notice increased urination. Here we are most interested in
an increase of the total volume of urine being produced. Again, this may not be noticed in cats that are outside for much of the day but, for other cats, owners may notice that the litter needs changing more often or that litter training is lost.

If your cat is visiting the litter tray more often this may not be due to an increase in urine volume. Often it will be due to increased urgency in urination caused by diseases of the bladder such as cystitis. These cats will usually pass only small volumes of urine, they may vocalise as they are irritated or in pain and there may be blood staining.

**Why might my cat be drinking more?**

When cats are drinking more it is nearly always caused by a disease (either based in the kidneys or elsewhere in the body but affecting the kidneys secondarily) that is causing the kidneys to make dilute urine and the cat then has to drink to stop being thirsty. So it is actually usually the increased urine production that happens first and the increased drinking is to compensate.

In the vast majority of cats that are drinking excessively it is because they are genuinely thirsty as their kidneys are making more urine, their bodies are detecting the loss of fluid and stimulate the desire to drink.

There are two main reasons for this: either there is a problem with a hormone that regulates the concentration of urine – this is best known as ADH (anti-diuretic hormone). It may be that there is not enough ADH being produced or it may be that the kidneys fail to react to the ADH.

The second cause is that the urine contains large amounts of an abnormal substance that draws water out with it into the urine by a physical process called osmosis; an example is glucose (sugar) in the urine of a diabetic.

The commonest diseases that often show up as a cat drinking excessively are chronic kidney failure, diabetes mellitus and hyperthyroidism, but all these conditions may show in other ways for example weight loss or changes in appetite and behaviour.

There are many other conditions that also have an increase in thirst and urination as part of their clinical signs: high blood calcium levels (hypercalcaemia), low blood potassium (hypokalaemia), bacterial infection in the kidneys (pyelonephritis), liver failure, acromegaly and hyperadrenocorticism (each of which show with signs of diabetes mellitus), acute renal failure (especially in the recovery phase), diabetes insipidus, renal glucosuria; pyometra (infection in the uterus), hypoadrenocorticism and damage to the pituitary gland.
Other possibilities that should be obvious but must be considered are certain drugs such as the diuretics often used to treat heart failure and some foods that are designed to promote water intake by being high in salt.

There are also important underlying diseases that must be considered. For example hypercalcaemia is often caused by cancers such as lymphoma and hypokalaemia might be caused by hyperaldosteronism (Conn's syndrome).

Occasionally excessive thirst is the basic cause, this is called primary polydipsia. It can be due to brain disease or a behavioural abnormality. In cats the commonest cause of primary polydipsia is probably as part of the common endocrine condition hyperthyroidism.

**What can be done to help my cat?**

Finding out the cause of the excessive drinking is the priority so if you think your cat may be drinking more than usual an early visit to your vet is advisable. There will then be options for treatment.

Not all options suit every cat and each owner but the conditions listed above can all be helped, to varying degrees. One thing that is common to all is that in no circumstances should water be withheld.

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**Lanes Vets Locations & Contact Information.**

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<th>Veterinary Centre</th>
<th>Address</th>
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