

PET HEALTH

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3231 E. Highland Drive



Jonesboro
Family Pet
Hospital

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Mon & Fri • 7:00 am - 6:00 pm

Wed • 7:00 am - 5:00 pm

Tues & Thurs • 7:00 am - 8:00 pm

Sat • 8:00 am - 5:00 pm

Urethral Obstruction AKA “Blocked Tomcat”

The term “blocked tomcat” or “blocked tom” refers to the obstruction of normal urine output from

the urinary bladder through the urethra. Because of differences in male cats’ urethral anatomy, this condition occurs more frequently in tomcats and is thusly named; but it can occasionally occur in female cats as well. When urine cannot be eliminated from the body, the bladder becomes painfully distended and kidney failure occurs.

Toxins are built up in the bloodstream causing harmful effects on the brain, heart, and other organ systems. Urine obstruction is a life-

threatening condition and can result in permanent kidney damage or death if not quickly corrected. This is truly a medical emergency!

Abnormal urine sediments in the form of inflammatory cells, blood, mucous, bacteria, and urinary crystals can become clumped together and collect at a narrowing in the urethra. Male cats’ urethras taper toward the opening at the prepuce making them especially susceptible to forming a “plug” which obstructs normal urination. All of the constituents of a urinary plug can be the result of a true bacterial infection or a complicated disorder called Feline (Idiopathic) Lower Urinary Tract Disease, or FLUTD. More than half of cats over 10 years of age with FLUTD will have an undetermined cause of the disease. Nonetheless, a blocked urethra is a serious possible consequence.

To understand all of the harmful aspects of urine obstruction, it is important to realize the normal function of the urinary tract. The kidneys’ primary purpose is to excrete

toxins through the urine. Urine is produced twenty-four hours a day and flows constantly from the kidneys through tiny tubes called ureters into the bladder. The bladder stores urine temporarily until it is eliminated outside of the body through the urethra.

When urine obstruction occurs, the cat is unable to void his/her urine. This is a very painful condition, which causes the cat to frequent the litter pan to attempt to urinate without success. **Straining to urinate can often be confused with constipation.** The cat may howl in discomfort, lick at the urethral opening, and repeatedly assume the position to urinate.

Urinary obstruction can also cause kidney failure due to backpressure from the bladder causing urine production in the kidneys to stop. This causes urinary waste to build up in the blood. These toxins can lead to vomiting, lethargy and appetite loss. The electrolyte potassium can reach dangerous levels causing heart arrhythmias or cardiac arrest. Your veterinarian can evaluate this by performing blood work.

Only after restoring normal urine production and flow will it become clear whether permanent kidney damage has occurred and how significant the damage will be. Long-term damage to the bladder muscle can also be cause from over distention when unable to urinate. Because it can be difficult to ascertain at home whether or not the cat can urinate normally (a urinary tract infection can mimic an obstruction because both involve straining to urinate), any cat suspected of urinary obstruction should be dealt with on an emergency basis. If the bladder is distended, the veterinarian will relieve the obstruction with urethral catheterization. This will immediately restore kidney urine flow and help to eliminate toxins from the bloodstream. Treatment for urinary obstruction must be performed as an emergency. If you have further questions regarding this disease, or how to try to prevent it from happening you may contact your regular veterinarian or search on our web



Please contact Jonesboro Family Pet Hospital or your veterinarian for further information on Urethral Obstruction.