



PAW HEALTH NETWORK, INC.

FELINE URETHRAL OBSTRUCTION

ABOUT THE DISEASE

Feline urethral obstruction (FUO) is a disease process that has few clinical symptoms, up until patients have a complete inability to pass urine. This disease is almost exclusively seen in male feline patients.

Symptoms of a **FUO** can appear very similar to a urinary tract infection, but are often much more dramatic. These symptoms often include:

- Severe pain when attempting to urinate (dysuria)
- Straining to urinate (stranguria) without being able to produce urine, or very scant amounts
- Increased frequency of urination, while urinating small amounts at one time (pollakiuria), or no urine passed at all
- Blood in the urine (hematuria), if any urine is passed at all

There are often several different risk factors for the development of **FUO**, but other diseases will predispose patients to developing an infection as well. The most common predisposing diseases include:

- Urinary crystals with or without secondary infection
- Urinary bladder stones (uroliths) with secondary infection and urinary debris
- Urinary bladder cancer with secondary infection and urinary debris
- Spontaneous inflammation (idiopathic cystitis) with or without secondary infection and urinary debris
- Urethral stricture (narrowing of urethra) caused by long-term/repeated infection, or past obstruction
- Urethral spasms caused by infection and inflammation
- Kidney infection (pyelonephritis) with secondary infection and urinary debris

Please see the documents on these diseases for additional information.

Once patients develop a **FUO**, a whole host of abnormalities develop. Most commonly there is an increase in kidney values, life threatening changes in blood potassium levels, and severe damage to the urinary bladder and urethra. In some severe cases, there is actual damage to the kidney tissue which may lead to long-standing kidney failure. Please see the [*Kidney Failure - Chronic*](#) document for additional information.

Unfortunately, once a patient develops a urethral obstruction, there is a relatively high chance of recurrence. Approximately 1/3 - 1/2 of patients will re-obstruct again in their life. Following successful management of **FUO**, it is very important that you continue to monitor for signs of obstruction (abdominal pain, difficulty urinating, decreased urine volume, blood in the urine, etc.).

OBTAINING A DIAGNOSIS

A definitive diagnosis is often made following a thorough clinical history and physical examination with a veterinarian.

Routine laboratory and urine testing will provide other information regarding kidney involvement and underlying disease.

TREATMENT

Emergency management requires hospitalization, urinary catheter placement, IV (intravenous) fluid support, anti-inflammatories, pain medications, antibiotics, sedatives, and urethral relaxing medications. Patients are often hospitalized for 24-36 hours depending on the debilitation of the patient.

Long-term management often includes a prescription diet for urinary crystals or bladder stones.

In repeatedly obstructed patients, a surgical procedure exists called perineal urethrostomy, or PU, which will remove a naturally narrowed portion of urethra and the penis to greatly reduce the chances of urethral obstruction. With some potential long-term draw backs, this surgery is often not performed until the second or third occurrence of urethral obstruction.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- This is a complex disease, often requiring multiple management tools, some of which life-long.
- There is no easy fix, and management is often expensive.
- Seek immediate veterinary evaluation if a male cat develops straining or painful urinary symptoms.