

FELINE UPPER RESPIRATORY INFECTION

UNDERSTANDING SYMPTOMS, TREATMENTS AND THE SPREAD OF FELINE UPPER RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS



WHAT IS A FELINE UPPER RESPIRATORY INFECTION?

Feline Upper Respiratory Infection (URI) is a term for common respiratory illnesses in cats. These infections are mostly caused by viruses, though bacteria can sometimes make things worse. They spread easily between cats but usually don't affect other animals or people.

HOW IS URI SPREAD?

Feline URI spreads through secretions from the nose and mouth of an infected cat. It can pass from one cat to another through sneezing or by sharing things like toys, bowls, and even through human hands and clothes. To keep other cats safe, keep them away from the sick cat and don't share their items. Be sure to wash your hands well after touching the sick cat.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

- Sneezing
- Nasal discharge (may be clear, green, yellow, or bloody)
- Congestion
- Eye irritation/discharge
- Redness and inflammation of conjunctiva (lining of the eyes)
- Fever
- Lethargy
- Loss of appetite
- Dehydration

HOW IS URI TREATED?

MEDICATION: If the illness is mild, your cat may not need medication. If a bacterial infection is suspected, the vet may prescribe antibiotics. The vet might also suggest subcutaneous fluids if your cat is dehydrated. Don't try to give these fluids at home unless you've been trained to do so.

FOOD: Make sure your cat is eating. When cats have stuffy noses, they might not be able to smell their food and may not feel like eating. Try tempting them to eat by giving them wet food warmed up in the microwave for a few seconds to make it more appealing and stinky.

CLEAN: Use a soft cloth dampened with warm water to gently clean discharge from the cat's nose and eyes.

NEBULIZE: If your cat is very congested, use a humidifier or place them in the bathroom with hot water running in the shower for 10 – 20 minutes a couple of times a day. For a stronger steam treatment, put your cat in a carrier next to the sink, cover both the carrier and the sink with a thick towel leaving a gap in the towel for airflow, and run hot water for 5-10 minutes.

WHEN SHOULD I CONTACT A VET?

- Not eating for more than 24 hours
- Green, yellow, or bloody discharge from the nose or eyes
- Difficulty breathing, especially panting or breathing through an open mouth
- Depressed, lethargic, or unresponsive cat: a slight decrease in activity is expected, but if the cat is much less active than normal, that is a concern
- Vomiting or diarrhea that lasts more than 24 hours
- Little or no improvement after a week of home supportive care