



What are the signs of feline urethral obstruction?

Urethral obstruction in male cats is a life-threatening disorder. The male cat urethra (tube from the bladder to the outside) is narrow, and it can be blocked by urinary stones, sand or grit, or sometimes just inflammation. Cats with this problem will initially make multiple trips to the litter box, pass smaller volumes of urine than normal or pass no urine with straining, and will eventually show signs of systemic illness (lethargy, inappetence, vomiting). If your cat is exhibiting these behaviors or signs, seek emergency veterinary care as soon as possible. If your cat is not urinating at all, this is life-threatening.

How is urethral obstruction treated?

Cats with urethral obstruction will require IV fluid therapy and correction of any electrolyte imbalances. The obstruction is generally relieved by passing a catheter into the urethra while the cat is sedated, and that catheter may be maintained for some time to allow for swelling to reduce. If a catheter cannot be passed into the bladder successfully or if the urethra blocks again following catheter removal, surgery may be required to relieve the problem. A perineal urethrostomy is performed to bypass the obstructed area and to make the urethral opening larger. This procedure only needs to be done on male cats because of the narrow urethra that runs through the penis. This surgery creates an opening that is more like the opening that a female cat urinates through, which is larger and much less likely to obstruct.

What care is required after surgery if my cat requires a perineal urethrostomy?

Cats that undergo this procedure generally remain hospitalized for one to several days, where they are observed for appropriate urination and normalization of electrolyte imbalances. Once at home, activity is limited and urination habits are closely observed for two weeks. Sometimes there is blood in the urine or spotting that will resolve in 4-7 days. An Elizabethan collar is required for two weeks to prevent the cat from licking the surgical area to allow for proper healing. Any licking of the site can cause the stitches to come apart or the opening to scar.

What is the prognosis for my cat after perineal urethrostomy surgery?

These cats should not have future life-threatening urethral obstructions. However, they do require monitoring and management to help prevent future stone recurrence, urinary tract infection, or flare-ups of inflammation.