

Overview

Diabetes mellitus (diabetes) is most common in older, overweight cats. As in people, diabetes affects the endocrine (hormone) system and causes dangerously high levels of glucose in the blood. Diabetes can be treated at home with diet and insulin injections. Some cats may even get to a point where they no longer need daily insulin injections. Along with the right diet and monitoring by you and your veterinarian, your cat can lead a long, happy life with diabetes.



The Usdan Institute for Animal Health Education at the Animal Medical Center is the leading provider of pet health information. We aim to inform and empower pet parents and to share information with the public. With our staff of over 100 doctors and the knowledge gained from more than 100 years of experience, we are uniquely positioned to deliver the best and most up-to-date information for all your pet health needs.

If you have a question about pet health, we have the answer.

amcny.org/usdaninstitute

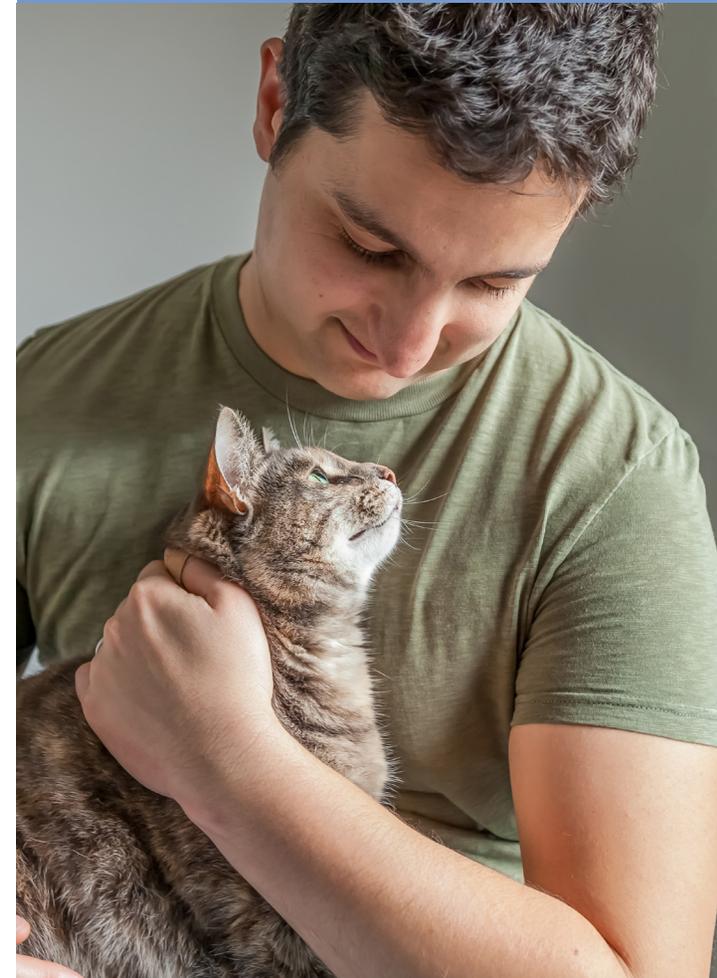
AMC
SINCE 1910

Animal Medical Center
Usdan Institute for
Animal Health Education

Diabetes in Cats

Diagnosis, treatment, and monitoring for your cat

Pet parent education series



What is it?



- Diabetes is caused by your cat's inability to produce enough insulin to metabolize, or process, sugars. Sugar builds up in the bloodstream and can't be used by the body for energy.
- Most cats get type 2 diabetes. Diabetes often affects overweight, older male cats. Obesity is a common cause of insulin resistance, where the body produces normal amounts of insulin, but the insulin doesn't work appropriately within the body.
- Cats treated with steroids or other immunosuppressive medications are also predisposed to type 2 diabetes, as these drugs can cause insulin resistance.

What are the signs?



- Weight loss despite increased appetite
- Increased urination
- Increased thirst

If your cat shows any of these signs, call your veterinarian to discuss the possibility of diabetes.

How is it diagnosed?



- It can be hard to diagnose diabetes in cats since they often have a high blood sugar level when they are stressed by a visit to the veterinarian.
- A diagnosis is made based on clinical signs reported by the owner, a high blood sugar level, and sugar in the urine.
- A fructosamine test, which is a blood test that measures the sugar levels for the past 2 weeks, may also be used. This test is similar to the hemoglobin A1C test used in people.

Can it be treated?



- There's no cure for diabetes in cats, but it can be treated successfully.
- If diabetes is treated early, cats may experience an insulin remission, where they no longer need daily injections. It's hard to predict when, if, or how long remission will last.
- Typically, cats need twice daily doses of insulin through either injections or an insulin pen.
- You'll need to give an insulin shot every 12 hours, but the injections are painless, fast, and easy to give.
- Pills, also called oral hypoglycemic agents, don't work in cats.

How are diabetic cats monitored?



- Veterinarians rely on clinical signs reported by owners to see if diabetes is properly controlled.
- It may be helpful to keep a log of how often your cat urinates, how much water they drink, their appetite, and the insulin dose.
- You can also use tools such as urine dipsticks to measure the amount of sugar in the urine and at-home blood sugar tests.
- You may be able to check your cat's blood sugar using a portable glucometer. This involves pricking the ear for blood at specific times after insulin administration.
- Always follow your veterinarian's instructions when adjusting the insulin dose to avoid giving too much or too little to your cat.

What if insulin doesn't work?



- If the insulin isn't improving your cat's condition, check to see you're handling and injecting the insulin properly.
- Your veterinarian may recommend testing for other diseases that can prevent the insulin from working, such as hyperthyroidism, urinary tract infection, and inflammatory bowel disease.

What about diet?



- If your cat is overweight, work with your veterinarian to set up a plan for controlled weight loss.
- Many veterinarians recommend feeding a high protein, low carbohydrate diet.

What is the outlook?



- Many cats with diabetes can live a long and fulfilling life, but you must be willing to invest time and money to ensure optimal control of diabetes.

