



**Veterinary House Calls**  
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## **IDIOPATHIC CYSTITIS**

Interstitial or idiopathic cystitis (IC) is not just a bladder disorder. Its cause is not fully understood, but is most likely the result of complex interactions between the bladder, nervous system, adrenal glands, husbandry practices and the living environment.

The symptoms you may see are nonspecific and may include straining, frequent urination, urinating small amounts, blood in urine and urinating in places other than the litterbox. Cats with recurrent symptoms can be episodic (comes and goes) while others are persistent.

IC affects male and female cats equally. It is more often seen in indoor cats, cats that are sensitive, fearful or aggressive, and cats that get over 75% of calories from dry food. *60-70% of cats less than 10 years old who present with these symptoms have IC.* Other possible causes include “stones” in the urinary tract, structural abnormalities, behavior, infection (<2%) and neoplasia (<1%).

Diagnosing IC starts by ruling out other causes. Urinalysis, radiographs, and blood work are done initially. If these results are negative, then advanced imagery can be pursued. Treatment may also be recommended at this point.

The goal of treatment is to decrease the severity and duration of symptoms during an episode and increase the interval between episodes in those with recurrent IC.

A medication may be prescribed for relief of bladder pain or to decrease spasms in the urethra. This will assist in comforting your cat and help facilitate further environmental modifications.

An important part of therapy includes Environmental Enrichment. The goal is to decrease stress in the indoor cat which may lead to triggers causing bladder inflammation and pain. The following ideas should be implemented as soon as possible.

#### Litterbox Management

This is essential. The goal is to have a pristine place for your cat to eliminate.

- Have one more litterbox than the number of cats in the house.
- Clean the litterboxes twice a day.
- Use uncovered boxes with unscented litter.
- Initially, offer a variety of litters then use the one your cat prefers.
- The litterbox should be larger than the average box sold. Think sweater box size!
- Do not feed, water or have resting spots near the box.
- Don't skimp on the amount of litter in the box: at least 1 1/2 inches deep.

#### Clean Up

Areas that have been previously soiled with urine need to be cleaned properly. To eliminate "accident" odors, use enzymatic products such as *Urine-Off*, *Anti-Icky Poo*, or *Zero Odor*.

To make these areas unattractive to your cat, use aluminum foil and/or citrus smells on the area.

#### Diet

Transition your cat to the highest amount of canned food possible or add water to the dry or semi-moist food. Increase water intake by keeping water bowls filled to the top, use larger bowls, and try "water fountains".

#### Managing Conflict

If conflict exists between cats in a multi-cat household, then this needs to be addressed. One option is to separate resources for each cat, preferably in places where the cats can use them without being seen.

#### Activity

The idea is to simulate activities a cat would encounter in the wild.

- laser-light pointers
- lures, feathered fishing pole toys
- small moving toys
- a container or toy that intermittently releases food during play



--cat nip toys

### Space

The goal here is to increase available space.

--offer several scratching posts, both vertical and horizontal  
--increase climbing, hiding and resting places with hammocks, platforms, raised walkways, shelves or window seats

### Feliway

This is a synthetic feline facial pheromone used to decrease vigilance in cats so its need to mark or spray its territory is decreased. The effect appears to be more pronounced in some cats than in others.

It comes in a spray bottle or plug-in diffuser.

If all of the above measures are implemented yet are ineffective or inadequately decrease the signs of interstitial cystitis, then please schedule an appointment to discuss further options.

Other helpful resources:

[www.vet.ohio-state.edu/indoorcat.htm](http://www.vet.ohio-state.edu/indoorcat.htm)

[www.indoorcat.org](http://www.indoorcat.org)

From the Cat's Point of View by

Felinestien by

[www.perfectpaws.com](http://www.perfectpaws.com)