

# HOW TO KNOW IT'S AN EMERGENCY

## KITTY CAT CRISIS

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Cats are generally very healthy animals but can experience health emergencies requiring immediate veterinary care. It can be difficult to decide if your feline friend needs immediate attention, as they are very good at hiding their symptoms. Cats are prey animals, meaning they do not want to show weakness or pain for their own protection. By the time we recognize a problem in our cats the disease could be much more advanced. Many disease processes in cats produce similar symptoms. Vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy, hiding, inappetence, and increased vocalization are all signs to look for. This article outlines symptoms to look for in a few of the more common feline emergencies.

**Linear Foreign Bodies:** Vomiting, decreased appetite, and lethargy are common signs in any feline illness but can point towards an ingested foreign body. Cats are notoriously curious and playful creatures but this behavior can get them into trouble. Many cats love to play with string-like objects and sometimes swallow them in the process! If the string-like object gets stuck in the GI tract, your cat could experience a life-threatening emergency. Surgery to remove the object is most likely needed. Its best to keep all string-like objects out of your cat's reach!

**Urinary Obstructions:** If your cat is visiting the litter box frequently and not producing urine there could be a urinary obstruction. Cats may also vocalize while in the litter box due to the pain associated

with this disease. Urinary obstructions typically affect male cats due to their narrow and shortened urethra. Mucus or even bladder stones can plug the urethra. If you suspect your cat could have a urinary obstruction seek veterinary care immediately as this illness can become life threatening very quickly.

**Cat Fights:** Lethargy, limping, and obsessive localized grooming can sometimes be an indication that your cat has been in a fight. Cat fights are very common in outdoor cats and can even happen in indoor cats that generally get along well. It only takes one quick scratch or bite to produce a wound that could lead to infection.

**Feline Asthma:** Difficulty breathing is typically very easily recognized as an emergency but feline asthma symptoms can be much more subtle on initial onset. Coughing is a common first symptom

of feline asthma. Many times coughing can be confused with hairball problems. If your cat seems to me working hard to cough up a hairball but isn't successful a trip to the veterinarian may be in order. X-rays are typically used to diagnose feline asthma and early diagnosis will allow early treatment to prevent a suddenly life threatening event.

It is generally best to err on the side of caution and have your cat evaluated if you are ever concerned. It is also important to have your cat evaluated at least once a year by your veterinarian to insure your cat is healthy. Early detection of illness is key for your cat's health. Finally, it is important to have a plan in place should your cat need emergency care. Take some time to find your nearest animal emergency hospital and always have a cat carrier ready to transport your feline friend.

