

HOW TO TELL IF YOUR CAT IS ILL

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QUESTIONNAIRE

Your cat cannot explain his symptoms, so it's the responsibility of you and your veterinarian to keep him healthy. Cats are very good at hiding their illness so it is up to you to observe your cat for abnormalities.

Common indications of a "sick pet" include: lethargy, disorientation, weakness, weight loss, seizure, lack of appetite, vomiting, diarrhea, unproductive retching, straining to urinate, bloody urine, difficulty or inability to walk, bleeding, pale mucous membranes, difficulty breathing and persistent cough. You know your pet best and can often notice subtle early warning signs that someone else may not detect. If you observe any of the mentioned symptoms or other signs that concern you, call your veterinary hospital. The safest approach would be to have your pet examined.

Once your pet is at the hospital, your veterinarian may ask additional questions to help localize or diagnose the problem. It may help to be prepared to answer some of the following questions:

- How long have you owned your cat?
- What is the age of your cat?
- Has your cat experienced any previous illnesses?
- Is your cat currently under treatment for an illness or disease?
- Has your cat ever been tested for Feline Leukemia or Feline AIDS
- Where did you get your cat (adoption center, breeder, previous stray, etc.)?
- What preventative medications is your cat currently taking?
- Does your cat receive any consistent flea treatment?
- Has your cat been vaccinated? When? For what?
- What other type of pets do you have?
- Are any other pets ill?
- Have there been any recent acquisitions?
- Have there been any recent activities such as boarding, grooming, etc.?
- Is the majority of your cat's time spent indoors or outdoors?
- Have there been any recent changes in diet or eating habits?

- What brand of food does your cat eat? How much? How often?
- Do you offer your pet table scraps?
- How frequently and what type of treats are offered?
- How much water does your cat typically drink per day?
- Have there been any recent changes in water consumption?
- What type of litter do you use and how frequently is the litter box cleaned?
- Have you noticed any coughing or sneezing?
- Have you noticed any lumps or bumps on your cat?
- Is your cat urinating normally?
- Is your cat having normal bowel movements?
- When is the last time he/she had a bowel movement?
- Have you noticed any recent weight loss or weight gain?

After answering some general questions, more specific questions need to be answered. A brief cursory exam of your pet at home can help you determine the answers. These questions are also commonly asked when pet owners are seeking help over the phone. Be prepared to answer the following questions, depending on the problem with your pet:

REGARDING THE EYES

- Have you noticed an increase or decrease in tear production?
- Do the eyes appear cloudy or red?
- Have you noticed any discharge?
- Do the eyes appear bloodshot?
- Are the pupils the same size in both eyes?
- Have you noticed your pet rubbing or pawing at eyes?
- Is your cat squinting his/her eyes?
- Do the eyes appear to be sunken or excessively protruding?

REGARDING THE EARS

- Do you notice any swelling or discharge from the ears?
- Are the ears drooping when they normally stand erect?
- Are the ears red and inflamed?
- Do you notice any odor?
- Is your cat rubbing or pawing at the ears?

- Have you noticed a lot of head shaking?
- Have you noticed any pain or crying when you rub or scratch your cat's ears?

REGARDING THE NOSE

- Have you noticed any congestion, sneezing or coughing?
- Have you noticed any blood coming from the nose?
- Have you noticed any nasal discharge?

REGARDING THE MOUTH

- Have you noticed any swelling of the lips or tongue?
- Have you noticed any bleeding from the mouth?
- What color are the gums – tissue just above the teeth?
- Is your cat able to open and close the mouth normally?
- Is there any pain involved in opening or closing the mouth?
- Have you noticed any excessive drooling or foaming at the mouth?
- Is your cat able to swallow food normally?
- Are there any foreign objects such as bones or sticks stuck on the roof of the mouth or around the teeth?

REGARDING THE CHEST

- Is your pet experiencing any difficulty breathing?
- Have you noticed panting?
- Is there any pain when the chest area is petted?
- Have you noticed any recent coughing?
- What is the heart rate?
- Is the heartbeat steady and consistent?
- Place your hand or your ear on the left side of your cat's chest, just behind the elbow. You should be able to feel or hear the heartbeat. Count how many beats the heart pumps in one minute.

REGARDING THE ABDOMEN/STOMACH AREA

- Has your cat been having any diarrhea or vomiting?
- Is your cat able to eat and drink normally?
- Does the abdomen/stomach area appear swollen or distended?
- Does your cat have pain when the stomach area is petted?

- Is your cat known to chew on non-food items such as clothing, towels, strings, etc.?

REGARDING THE URINARY AND REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEMS

- Have you noticed any difference in urinating?
- Does your cat seem to strain to urinate or cry in pain?
- Does your cat repeatedly try to urinate with no urine produced?
- Is there any blood in the urine?
- How frequently does your cat urinate?
- Is your female cat spayed? At what age? Did she ever have kittens?
- If your cat was not spayed, when was her last heat cycle and was she bred?
- Is your male cat neutered? At what age?
- Do you notice any discharge from the vaginal area?
- Do you notice any discharge from the penis?
- If your cat is not neutered, do you notice any swelling of the testicles?
- Have you noticed your cat excessively licking or grooming the genital area?

REGARDING THE MUSCULOSKELETAL SYSTEM – BONES AND JOINTS

- Have you noticed any limping?
- Are any legs or joints swollen?
- Has your cat been excessively licking at one area of his/her legs?
- Does your pet show signs of pain when walking?
- Is your cat able to walk normally?
- Does your cat walk on his/her knuckles?
- Does your cat drag any legs when walking?
- Have you noticed signs of pain when petting your pet?

By supplying the answers to these questions, your veterinarian will be in a much better position to help your pet. Additional tests may be necessary to find out what the problem is but the answers to the above questions can greatly narrow the area of concern.