What is feline lower urinary tract disease?

Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD) is inflammation of the bladder and urethra. Usually infection is not involved. The inflammation can cause mucous, blood and crystal clumps to form within the bladder. These clumps can get stuck in the urethra, especially in the male cat, leading to obstruction. Urinary obstruction is a life-threatening condition that requires immediate treatment and care.

Signs and Symptoms of Urinary Obstruction:

- Frequent trips to the litter box with minimal urine production/output
- Straining
- Blood in the urine
- Vocalizing while attempting to urinate
- Lethargy and hiding
- Vomiting

Medical Treatment:

Initial treatment involves relief of the urinary obstruction. This usually requires sedation/anesthesia for placement of a urinary catheter. Many cats will need IV fluids for at least 24 hours to help resolve the systemic issues caused by the obstruction. Some cats can be managed successfully with medications, lifestyle changes and prescription diet. For the patient who suffers repeated episodes of urethral obstruction, surgery is the best option.

When is surgery indicated?

Surgery is indicated when the obstructions are recurrent (happening more than 1-2 times), when a urinary catheter can’t be passed or when there is compromise or damage to the urethra.

Surgical Treatment:

A urethrostomy is a surgical procedure that makes a new, functional opening in the urethra. This is done to correct/bypass or prevent further urethral obstruction which can be caused by stones, stricture, tumor, protein plugs, or trauma.

The surgery performed is a Perineal Urethrostomy (PU). In male cats, the urethra narrows significantly as it approaches the tip of the penis. The narrow urethra makes male cats prone to obstruction. PU surgery involves removal of the scrotum and penis allowing for opening and enlargement of the urethra. Effectively, it converts the urinary system to one similar to the female cat. This allows a larger opening for the crystals, proteins, stones, and sludge to pass through, eliminating future episodes of obstruction.
Consultation and Scheduling:

We recommend a consultation with our surgeon to discuss the surgical procedure, at home care and long term prognosis. Our goal is to find the best option for your pet and your family.

We are available on the weekends to provide surgical services if needed for a urinary obstruction.

We can schedule surgery for the same day as the consultation if that is the best decision for your pet.

Patients usually stay with us overnight after surgery for pain management, post-anesthesia monitoring and incision management. We have a veterinarian monitoring our patients 24 hours a day.

Recovery and Prognosis:

After surgery cats will have a small amount of bleeding from the surgery site, it usually resolves within a week. They will need to be kept in a small room for 2 weeks while healing and are not allowed to lick the surgery site during that time to allow healing of the delicate tissues.

Our cats do very well with this procedure, stricture or closing down of the surgery site is uncommon. Some cats will still have signs of urinary tract inflammation, however life-threatening obstruction is no longer a concern.