

FELINE VOMITING

What causes vomiting?

Vomiting is not a disease; rather, it is a symptom of many different diseases. Many cases of vomiting are self-limiting after a few days. Less commonly, vomiting may result from a serious illness, such as cancer. Even when vomiting is caused by mild illnesses, it may lead to death of the animal if treatment is not begun early enough to prevent severe fluid and nutrient losses.

How serious is vomiting in cats?

We attempt to determine how sick the cat has become as a consequence of the vomiting. When the cat is systemically ill (i.e., more than one body system is involved), some of the following may be noted:

1. Diarrhea
2. Dehydration
3. Loss of appetite
4. Abdominal pain
5. High fever
6. Lethargy
7. Bloody vomiting

What types of tests are performed to find the cause?

If vomiting is associated with several of the above signs, we perform a series of tests in the hope that a diagnosis may be made. When this can be done, more specific treatment may be initiated. Diagnostic tests may include radiography (x-rays) with or without barium, blood tests, biopsies of the stomach and intestinal tract, and exploratory abdominal surgery. Once the diagnosis is known, treatment may include special medications, diets, and/or surgery.

If your cat does not appear systemically ill from the vomiting, the cause may be less serious. Some of the minor causes of vomiting include stomach or intestinal viruses, stomach or intestinal parasites, and dietary indiscretions (such as eating garbage or other offensive or irritating materials). A minimum number of tests are performed to rule out certain parasites and infections. These cases may be treated with drugs to control the motility of the intestinal tract, drugs that relieve inflammation in the intestinal tract, and, often, a special diet for a few days. This approach allows the body's healing mechanisms to correct the problem. We expect improvement within 2-4 days; if this does not occur, we will make a change in medication or perform further tests to better understand the problem. Please keep us informed of lack of expected improvement so that we may manage the situation properly.