



Just like humans, cats can also suffer from diabetes. It is important to understand your cat's diet and requirements to ensure they live a long and healthy life.



## TIP

Collecting information about your cats diet, water intake and bathroom habits can help you identify diabetes early in your cat.

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## Need more advice?

Frank Samways Vet, at the The Lost Dogs Home will be able to assist you providing the best care for your pet.

## WHAT IS DIABETES?

Diabetes is caused by deficiency of insulin, which is an important hormone made by beta cells in the pancreas. The signs of diabetes in cats are typically weight loss despite a good appetite, and excessive thirst and urination.

## HOW IS DIABETES TREATED IN CATS?

Treatment of diabetes in cats usually requires daily administration of insulin injections and appropriate nutrition, and must be specifically tailored for each individual. The goal is to control the signs of diabetes (see above) and to avoid low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) due to insulin overdose.

The best outcome tends to be achieved when the owner of the diabetic pet and their veterinarian work together as a team.

## WHAT IS DIABETIC REMISSION?

Diabetic remission is a period of time when a diabetic animal does not require insulin injections to control the signs of diabetes. This is most common in diabetic cats, especially in the first few months after diabetes is first recognised.

## WHAT COMMITMENT IS REQUIRED AT HOME WHEN TREATING A DIABETIC CAT?

Insulin injections are typically administered by the owner to a diabetic pet every 12 hours. It is very important that injections are given at the exact time that they are due. If it is ever not possible to give an insulin injection on time, then it is better to miss that particular injection than to give it at another time.

Appropriate nutritional strategies can complement insulin therapy in diabetic cats and so it is often beneficial to make changes to the diet or feeding regimen.

Information collected at home about a diabetic cat's progress helps to monitor the success of treatment and can provide clues about the risk of hypoglycaemia. The most useful information comes from routine recording of general demeanour, daily water intake, changes in body weight, and the presence or absence of glucose in the urine.

## COLLECTING IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR DIABETIC CAT

1. **Appetite, general demeanour and behaviour:** this should be recorded every day.
2. **Meal amount and composition** should also be recorded every day.
3. **Insulin dose:** this should be recorded twice each day.
4. **Water intake:** this should ideally be measured every day when your cat is receiving insulin and every week when your cat does not require insulin. The key is to determine how many milliliters of water your cat drinks over a known number of hours. For example, a measured volume of water can be provided in a bowl and access to other water sources prevented. The volume of water remaining in the bowl can then be measured after 24 hours.
5. **Urine glucose and ketones:** this ideally requires collection of a sample of urine from your cat every day. This can be either a liquid sample or some wet kitty litter or soil that has been moistened using tap water. The urine must be tested with test strips called Ketodiastix and a record kept of the results.
6. **Body weight:** ideally, a diabetic cat's body weight should be recorded once each week. It is important to use the same scales each time the cat is weighed. Scales designed for weighing adult humans are not suitable for cats. Scales designed for babies are a suitable option.

## ADVANTAGES OF USING AN INSULIN DOSING PEN

Insulin dosing pens are designed for use by people without medical training. They are easy to use, more accurate and precise for dose measurement and are less painful for the patient. As diabetic cats typically require small doses of insulin, for example 4 units or less of insulin every 12 hours, even small dosing errors can result in large day-to-day differences in dose.

Insulin pens are significantly more accurate and precise than insulin syringes for small doses. For example, when administering a dose of 1 unit of Lantus insulin, the average dose delivered using the SoloStar pen is 1.02 units (range: 0.60-1.40 units).

In comparison, a study evaluating the accuracy and precision of insulin dosing by pediatric nurses using 0.3 ml or 0.5 ml insulin syringes found that the average dose delivered when intending to administer 1 unit was 1.64 units (range: 0.65-2.80 units). Importantly, it can be seen that most syringe-measured doses exceed the intended dose.

The SoloStar insulin dosing pen is pre-filled with Lantus insulin and administers doses in 1 unit increments. The technique for administering insulin using a dosing pen is quite different to that for syringes and needles and so an introductory training session is required before using a pen at home. Discuss this with your vet.

## FEEDING YOUR CAT

Appropriate nutritional strategies can complement insulin therapy in diabetic cats and so it is often beneficial to make changes to the diet or feeding regimen. The lowest carbohydrate foods are the best for diabetic cats.

Most canned cat foods have a low carbohydrate content. The only dry cat foods that are generally permitted are the ones specifically formulated for diabetic cats, such as Hills m/d dry food, Royal Canin Diabetic dry food, or Purina ProPlan DM dry food. Meals may be consumed at any time and do not need to be matched with insulin injections.

**If you have noticed any change in your pets behaviour or eating patterns, it is important that you contact your vet or the team at Frank Samways Vet on (03) 8379 4498 or [vetclinic@dogshome.com](mailto:vetclinic@dogshome.com)**



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Since our official opening in 1913, we have been a voice for animals without owners caring for thousands of cats and dogs each year. Pioneers for fair animal laws, we continue to work on the front line to reduce the number of lost, abandoned and stray cats and dogs.

We rely on public support to run services and programs, including: proactive adoption, foster care, behaviour rehabilitation, low cost desexing and microchipping, and the promotion of better pet ownership through education.