

## My Cat Won't Eat - What can that mean?

The possibilities may seem endless for why your cat won't eat, but the most important thing to remember is that if this behaviour lasts for more than one day, it is very important to take your cat to the veterinarian.

A cat's loss of appetite is a medically significant symptom and often indicates illness. A comprehensive examination along with certain tests can detect something serious right away and can help lead the way to successful treatment.

### Dental Disease

Dental disease is one cause for a cat not to eat, but oral tumors or other inflammatory disorders can be responsible as well. Your cat's mouth may be sore from an injury or infection, making chewing difficult and painful. It could have an abscess, inflamed gums, a cut in its mouth or a broken tooth, for example. The visit to the veterinarian should include an assessment of your pet's mouth.

### Gastrointestinal Issues

Anything that causes your cat not to feel well can cause him or her to not want to eat, such as nausea due to gastrointestinal (GI) problems. There are a number of things that could be going on in your cat's GI tract:

- Parasites
- Colitis (acute or chronic inflammation of the membrane lining the colon)
- Gastroenteritis (inflammation or infection of the GI tract)
- Pancreatitis (inflammation or infection of the pancreas)
- Changes in the intestines' bacterial environment
- Foreign bodies (e.g. string) in the stomach or intestines can cause pain and blockages
- Cancer (e.g. intestinal lymphoma)

Along with not eating, weight loss, vomiting, diarrhea and constipation are all signs of GI distress. Only your veterinarian can diagnose a GI problem so it's important to do this as soon as possible to determine if a major disorder exists.

Some cat owners think a change in diet will help with GI issues, but you shouldn't try to treat your cat on your own without a proper diagnosis and consultation with your veterinarian.

### Kidney Disease

Another common cause for cats, particularly older cats, not to eat is kidney disease. Like GI problems, kidney disease causes nausea which will cause your cat not to eat. Only your veterinarian can diagnose kidney disease so it is again important to have your feline examined as soon as possible.

### Other Possible Causes

Once major diseases or conditions have been ruled out, your veterinarian may ask you about any recent events that could lead to a loss of appetite. Some cats tend to change eating habits for a number of reasons, including:

- A recent vaccination
- Traveling (motion sickness)
- Anxiety or depression
- Changes in familiar schedules

- An introduction to a new type of food
- Or sometimes just plain finickiness

However, these events would only cause a cat to miss a meal or at the most two. If the behaviour lasts for more than a day, you should contact your veterinarian.

### **What can I do if my cat is not eating?**

Determining the underlying reason your cat is not eating is the most important thing you can do for your cat. A cat's choice not to eat is medically significant and should be addressed by your veterinarian as soon as possible. Cats, unlike dogs or humans, get very sick very quickly if they are not eating.

### **Medical treatment**

Along with treating the underlying cause for not eating, there are medications that can be prescribed by your doctor to stimulate your cat's appetite.

In more serious cases, your veterinarian may also recommend syringe feeding a liquid diet or the placement of a feeding tube to ensure your cat is getting enough of the required nutrients for optimal health, however these measures are only recommended in conjunction with addressing the underlying medical cause for the anorexia.

Your veterinarian will partner with you to determine the most appropriate medical treatment is for your cat.