Cat Hairball Control: How You Can Help

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Digestion in cats is often complicated by the ingestion of large amounts of hair during grooming. To keep your cat healthy, here are the trouble signs to watch for, plus the options you can use to control hairballs and minimize the problems they can cause.

WHY CATS HAVE BAD HAIR DAYS

Your cat grooms herself frequently, licking her fur right down to the tip of her tail. While this fastidious cleaning improves her appearance, it creates yet another problem... disposal of the wet, ingested hair, commonly referred to as a hairball.

Your cat's hair does not pass easily through her gastrointestinal tract, nor can her stomach and pancreatic enzymes digest it. Normally, most of the hair she swallows is expelled in her stool. Problems occur, however, when her hair doesn't get excreted, and instead forms into a dense hairball, or mat, in her stomach. Your cat must now vomit the hairball, usually in a fit of disturbing coughing and choking.

PREVENTIVE AND MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

We do not suggest you use homemade products containing butter or oils, because they can bring about other digestive problems, or be absorbed by the cat's system before they have a chance to work. There are a number of effective ways you can help your cat deal with hairballs. Used routinely, they can help keep hairballs from forming:

GROOMING - Because cats are always grooming themselves, many owners do not realize that their cat will readily accept and appreciate brushing to remove loose hair. Brushing is the fastest and easiest way to reduce hair ingestion, and it also helps keep it off your furniture. There are many specialized cat grooming tools, including:

> **The Dual Sided Brush** teases out snarls and tangles with the pin brush side, and uses the bristle side to bring out the shine of your cat's coat.

FIBER - Other hairball remedies are available to add bulk and moisture to your cat's stool, making it easier to pass:

> **Drs. Foster & Smith Adult Cat Food Advanced Hairball Control formula** contains natural vegetable fiber to help move hair gently through your cat's digestive tract.
>
> **Cat grass** grows fast and is easy to care for.

LAXATIVES - Petroleum-based laxatives and hairball remedies, flavored to make them palatable for your pet, coat the swallowed hair and stool, allowing it to pass through your cat's digestive system.

> **Drs. Foster and Smith Hairball Remedy** is a petroleumfree product that

DON'T WAIT UNTIL PROBLEMS BECOME SERIOUS

It is normal for your cat to have hairballs occasionally. However, if she must deal with them frequently, dangerous problems can develop. Hairballs can block her intestinal tract, making it impossible for her to either vomit or eliminate. In fact, twenty-five percent of all impaction cases (something "stuck" in the digestive tract) that veterinarians see are due to hairballs. Signs of a major hairball problem, and possible impaction:

- Vomiting of undigested food
- Dry retching

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conditions your cat's digestive system.

WATER - Nothing is more important to your cat's digestion than fresh, clean water. To optimize water intake, provide water in the fashion your cat prefers:

Many are attracted to running water; the **Drinkwell Fountain** is the perfect solution. It continuously recirculates water at the flow rate you set.

- Inability to defecate
- Diarrhea
- Swollen abdomen

If you suspect your cat is impacted, see your veterinarian immediately. Your veterinarian has several options to resolve impactions, but serious blockages may require surgical removal. It is far better that you use preventive practices, and provide assistance with existing hairballs, before such problems occur.

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