

Coughing in cats is cause for concern

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why is my **CAT** coughing?

When any part of your cat's respiratory system becomes irritated, she may develop a cough. Coughing can be related to many things, including allergies, infection, lung parasites, or a mass in the chest. Unlike dogs, cats with heartworm disease or heart failure rarely cough. Because a cough can signify several different problems, you should schedule a veterinarian appointment immediately.

Your veterinarian will perform a thorough physical exam and first determine whether your cat is truly coughing; surprisingly, what sounds like a cough may actually be gagging, wheezing, or labored breathing. If your cat is actually coughing, your veterinarian will evaluate the type and frequency of cough to try to pinpoint the cause:

- A hacking, "honking" cough is generally associated with diseases of the large airways.
- Subtle, half-hearted coughing could be a sign of pulmonary edema (fluid in the lungs).
- A "moist-sounding" cough may indicate an infection of the lungs.

A cough is either productive (bringing up mucus, fluid, pus, or blood) or non-productive (producing sound only). Productive coughing is usually associated with a bacterial, viral, or fungal infection. Non-productive coughing may indicate allergic lung disease. Your veterinarian may also perform diagnostic tests, including: chest x-rays, ultrasound, a complete blood count (CBC), a blood chemistry profile, urinalysis, a heartworm test, a fecal exam, a feline leukemia and immunodeficiency virus test, and other more in-depth tests.

Treatment depends on the cough's cause

Bacterial pneumonia, for example, will require antibiotics and supportive care. A chest mass will require surgery, chemotherapy, radiation therapy, or a combination of all three. Your veterinarian will not take steps to suppress a productive cough, since your cat's body is trying to rid itself of the problem. If your cat's cough is non-productive, your veterinarian may prescribe a cough suppressant. NEVER use a human cough suppressant, as it could poison your cat.

Any cough is cause for concern

Your cat's cough could be a self-limiting nuisance or a sign of a serious illness. To prevent conditions that cause coughing, keep your cat as healthy as possible. Feed her a quality [diet](#) appropriate for her age, keep her [vaccinations](#) current, and follow a parasite control program that prevents [heartworms](#) and intestinal worms. And, as always, see your veterinarian regularly.