

Chronic Vomiting in Cats

General Information

Chronic vomiting refers to expelling stomach contents over a relatively long duration. This generally indicates that a more serious condition exists other than just a transient irritation of the upper digestive tract. It is helpful to determine the point of origin of the vomitus.

Regurgitation refers to expelling contents from the esophagus, and vomiting refers to expelling stomach contents. Both conditions may be just one or two episodes (acute) or long-standing, repetitive episodes (chronic). Expelled contents that are tubular in form are suggestive of esophageal contents. If bile (yellowish orange) is expelled, the stomach is the more suspicious point of origin of the material. Beyond that, determining whether the expelled contents are from regurgitation or vomiting is difficult, and other diagnostic methods may be required.

Chronic vomiting is generally caused by three major factors: (1) blockage of the GI tract; (2) inflammatory disease (including food allergies) of the digestive tract or other organs; (3) other systemic or widespread diseases, such as feline peritonitis, leukemia, hyperthyroid disease, kidney or heart disease, diabetes, pancreatitis and serious uterine infections.

Diagnostic means such as blood tests, x-rays, ultrasonography, endoscopy, and stomach or intestinal biopsies may be required to locate and identify the cause of the disorder.

Important Points in Treatment

1. Generally, the more common disorders are ruled out by conservative methods. These can include medication and possibly dietary changes. After that, more sophisticated means are required. Exploratory surgery under general anesthesia may be necessary.
2. If your cat is accustomed to going outside, it is imperative to contain it inside during the diagnostic period. There are many unknown factors outside that can have a direct influence on your cat's illness, and these must be eliminated or ruled out. Large cat cages can be purchased or the cat can be limited to one special area in the home. If your cat uses a kitty litter pan indoors, it probably will not be difficult to confine your cat indoors for an indefinite time.

Notify the Doctor if Any of the Following Occur

- Your cat continues to vomit.
- You are unable to administer the prescribed medication.
- Your cat refuses to eat or appears to be losing weight.