

Encouraging your cat to take in more fluids



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When might it be helpful to encourage a cat to take in more fluids?

Examples include but are not limited to:

- Cats with kidney disease
 - These cats are more vulnerable to becoming dehydrated and this can worsen their kidney disease
- Cats with idiopathic lower urinary tract disease (also called feline idiopathic cystitis: FIC)
 - Producing larger volumes of more dilute urine helps to prevent relapses of this condition

Tip 1: type of water bowl

- Choose a bowl from which your cat will want to drink
 - Experiment with the types of bowl that you offer your cat
 - In general cats prefer glass, metal and ceramic dishes to plastic ones
 - Most cats prefer a wide shallow bowl so that they do not need to put their head inside the container to drink from it. Cats do not usually like their whiskers to touch the side of their water (or food) bowl.
 - Some cats like drinking from tumblers (choose a non-breakable one if placing on a high up surface)
 - Fill the water bowl to the brim – cats like to drink from a full container

Tip 2: number of water bowls

- Have several water bowls so that your cat does not need to go far to find one
 - For example, one on each level of the home so the cat does not need to go up or down stairs to find their water
 - If you have more than one cat, you need to provide enough resources for each ‘social group’ of cats – at least one bowl of water for each social group of cats in the home

(As with people, some cats get on better with each other than others. Cats in the same social group are happy to rub against each other, curl up together and groom each other. If cats in the same home do not show this behaviour then they are likely to be in a different social group. Each social group needs its own food, water, litter, rest facilities and entry and exit points into the territory – i.e. it should not be possible for any cat in the home to prevent access to any of these things by another cat).

Tip 3: location of water bowls

- Choose a good location for your water bowls
 - Away from the food bowl: Cats prefer not to drink near their food
 - Avoid double bowls – one side for water and the other for food. Your cat will drink more if food and water are offered in separate locations
 - In a quiet location – away from doors that are heavily used or especially busy places

Tip 4: other water supplies

- Consider running water sources as some cats like to drink from moving water
 - Water fountains are one option e.g. Drinkwell®
 - Other options include
 - A dripping tap
 - A shower tray or bath with a small amount of water in it
 - Placing a ping pong ball inside a large diameter bowl full of water
 - some cats will enjoy playing with this and it can stimulate drinking as well as helping to create some movement of the water which many cats like

Tip 5: different types of water

- Consider experimenting with different types of water – see if your cat has a preference. Many cats do not like heavily fluorinated water.
- Try
 - Tap ('faucet') water (as long as safe for human consumption)
 - Collected rainwater – for example from containers placed in your garden
 - Many cats prefer to drink from puddles and water sources in the garden if given a choice
 - Mineral water

Tip 6: other tasty liquids

- Consider offering other liquids that your cat might find tasty
 - Water left over when a piece of chicken or fish has been cooked by poaching (allow to cool to room temperature before offering to your cat)
 - Prawns, fish or meat liquidised in water to create a soup or broth
 - Liquid from a can of tuna in spring water (avoid brine as this contains a lot of salt)
 - Liquid from a bag of frozen prawns which has been defrosted
- If any of the liquids identified above are popular – consider freezing portions of these in an ice cube tray
 - For some cats adding a cube of flavoured water to their normal bowl of water is enough to encourage drinking
- Avoid giving too much protein (e.g. meat) to a cat with kidney disease – discuss with your vet if you are not sure

Tip 7: liquids best not offered

- Liquids to avoid (or ask your vet about)
 - Salty liquids such as brine
 - Milk
 - If your cat has kidney disease this is not ideal as it contains high amounts of phosphate which is not good
 - Cow's milk cannot be fully digested by cats so it may cause diarrhoea
 - Anything containing onions or onion powder e.g. stock. Onions are poisonous to cats

Tip 8: more tips for increasing fluid intake

- Offer water and other liquids at room temperature where possible (the flavour is reduced in cold liquids)
- Feed a wet diet (cans or pouches) rather than a dry diet
 - Check with your vet before changing your cat's diet
 - Adding extra water to wet food can also help increase water intake. Some cats will happily eat a food that resembles soup!
 - Add water at room temperature rather than cold water, if possible

Tip 9: more tips for increasing fluid intake

- If your cat will only eat dry food (biscuits) try adding water to their food
 - Some cats will eat a dry food to which water is added
 - Add the water and leave for a short period to allow the biscuits to swell before offering this to your cat
 - Start by adding a small quantity of water (e.g. 1 dessert spoonful) and gradually increase this over a period of several days if your cat is happy to eat their watered down food.
 - Add water at room temperature rather than cold water, if possible

Tip 10

- Be persistent
- Be gradual in making changes – cats do not like sudden changes to their food or water
- Whatever you can do will make a difference and your cat will thank you!



Disclaimer

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