



FELINE UPPER RESPIRATORY INFECTION: FELINE URI

Congratulations on your new cat! The center staff has worked very hard to ensure the health of your cat, but Feline URI is a very common disease in cats adopted from shelters. Here is some information about this condition and how you can prevent your newly adopted cat from developing this condition and lead a happy, healthy life!

WHAT IS FELINE URI?

Feline URI is similar to the common cold in people. It is highly contagious and most commonly caused by a Herpes virus (aka Rhinotracheitis), although there are other viruses and bacteria that can also cause Feline URI.

Many cats and kittens have been exposed to these viruses and bacteria during their lifetime, but previous infections do not provide permanent immunity. This means cats currently living in your house may carry one or more of these viruses/bacteria. Stress, such as moving to a new home or a change in the household, can cause reactivation. Therefore, even if the cat you are adopting is recovering or has recovered from Feline URI, the stress of moving to your home may cause a relapse, just as the stress of adding another member to your household may cause your current cat(s) to develop URI.

The incubation period is anywhere from 3-14 days. A cat may appear healthy at adoption but show signs over the next few days because a virus or bacteria was incubating.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF FELINE URI?

- Sneezing
- Runny nose
- Red and/or watery eyes
- Lethargy
- Decreased appetite
- Less common are mouth ulcers (sores)

HOW IS FELINE URI SPREAD?

Feline URI is spread by air (from sneezing), hands, shared toys, and even the clothes of those who handle them. It is as common in a shelter as it is in a child day care center.

Feline URI is contagious to other cats, so keeping current household cats and new arrivals separated for at least 14 days after adoption is advised to give the new cat a chance to adjust to the new environment, and your current cat(s) a chance to adjust to the presence of another feline family member. Also be sure your current cat(s) are up-to-date on all vaccines.

Vaccinated cats can still get URI, but signs are usually very mild and last only a few days.

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR FELINE URI?

Contact your veterinarian if your cat has difficulty breathing or shows any signs of Feline URI. Treatment of Feline URI is usually symptomatic, and most cats recover within 1-2 weeks. Sneezing may persist for an additional few weeks.

Oral antibiotics are given only if a bacterial infection is suspected as viruses do not respond to antibiotics. Eye ointment may be used if the eyes are red or have discharge.

Provide a warm, stress-free environment.

Cats will often stop eating when they can't smell their food, as with a stuffy nose. Humidifiers and steamy bathrooms can help ease congestion. Warming wet food and feeding smelly food, such as fish-flavored canned products, can also help entice affected cats to eat. Contact your veterinarian if your cat does not eat for more than 1-2 days.

