

Feline Upper Respiratory Infection (URI)

URI is similar to the common cold in humans. It is especially common in cats that have been exposed to a lot of other cats, such as in an animal shelter. URI is rarely fatal and usually resolves in one to three weeks. Treatment generally consists of supportive care. In addition, antibiotics are sometimes given to treat possible bacterial infections. However, although secondary bacterial infections can make the problem worse, the underlying cause is often a viral infection. Viral infections are not cured by antibiotics – as with the common cold, there is no completely effective treatment besides time and allowing the cat's own immune system to do its job.

What are the signs of URI?

- Clear or colored nasal discharge (snot)
- Sneezing
- Red inflamed conjunctiva (lining of the eyes)
- Fever, lethargy, loss of appetite

What can I do to make my foster cat feel better?

What makes you feel better when you have a cold? A warm, quiet, comfy place to rest, chicken soup, orange juice and TLC! Your cat needs the same, with some slight modifications for felines!

- Make sure the cat is eating. When cats get stuffy noses, they can't smell their food very well and may not want to eat. Offer canned food, canned chicken, tuna or salmon, or meat flavored baby food.
- If the cat is producing discharge from eyes or nose, gently clean the cat's nose and eyes with a soft cloth wet with warm water.
- If the cat is very congested, use a humidifier or put the cat in the bathroom and run hot water in the shower for a few minutes a couple of times a day. For a more concentrated steam treatment, put the cat in a carrier next to the sink, cover the carrier and the faucet with a thick towel and run the water on hot for 5-10 minutes. The steam should remain trapped under the towel. A couple of drops of eucalyptus oil in the sink can help as well.
- "Little Noses" is an over the counter decongestant designed for infants that can help kittens too! A drop in each nostril 2 times a day can help.

When do I contact the shelter for veterinary attention?

- Not eating for more than 24 hours.
- Green or yellow discharge from the nose or eyes
- Difficulty breathing, especially panting or breathing through an open mouth
- Depressed or unresponsive cat: a slight decrease in activity is expected, but if the cat is much less active than you would expect, contact the shelter
- Vomiting or diarrhea that lasts more than 24 hours
- Little or no improvement after a week of home supportive care

What can I expect the veterinarian to prescribe?

- If an infection is indicated by fever or green or yellow discharge or other symptoms, the vet may prescribe an antibiotic. Give the antibiotic as directed, until it is gone. Do not stop giving the antibiotic if the cat seems to be getting better, continue as prescribed.

How to give medicine to a cat

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cJh_zLpFF88

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-no3nP-PicA&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tnrXzuUshnA&feature=related>

- If eyes are affected by the URI, eye ointment may be prescribed, administer as directed.

How to administer eye medicine to a cat:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cH9QgVAM53w&feature=fvw>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bS_ZD8Sgle0&feature=related

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rrVgQsvskGg&feature=related>

- If the cat is especially congested, you may be given a “Nebulization Set Up”. This is box and a nebulizer with a special nebulizing solution. The cats should be “nebed” at least twice a day for 10 to 20 minutes. If this is prescribed, you will be given special instructions to assist you.

How to nebulize a cat:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x61dYiFQ-Aw>



Kittens getting a breathing treatment called nebulizing to help cure upper respiratory infections.

How do I know my fosters are improving?

- Increased appetite
- Increased activity
- Sneezing almost never
- No ocular or nasal discharge

If you do not see an improvement in 3-5 days, or if the cats become MORE ill than when seen by the shelter veterinarian, arrange for them to come in and be seen again by shelter veterinarian staff. Just because they are 'on treatment' does not mean they will get better, careful monitoring of eating habits, energy levels, and symptoms is VERY important. If you are concerned, please bring them to the shelter for evaluation.

How do I know when my kittens are all better?

- Cats have completed all prescribed medication
- Cats have been symptom free for 5 to 7 days. No sneezing, no watery eyes, no boogery noses.
- Cats are eating regularly and have a normal activity level.