



## Cats & Dehydration

### What you should know!

Water makes up 80% of your kitty's body and when its volume gets out of balance it can severely affect their overall health. Since cats in the wild are carnivorous in nature, most of their water intake comes from the prey they eat. For this reason, they've developed a low thirst drive and can become dehydrated rather quickly. It's important for all cat-companions to know the signs, the causes, and most of all the solutions to dehydration in cats.

Dehydration is fairly simple. It results when your cat is taking in too little water, or losing too much. To make sure your cat gets enough water, it's important to give your cat access to fresh, clean water at all times. You may need to change it often (at least once a day), since most cats love "fresh" water. Some cats enjoy "moving" water, so consider investing in a cat water fountain! Keep in mind that if your cat only eats dry food, this contains 7-12% water, versus canned food that can have up to 80% water! So if you're concerned about dehydration, add moist food to their diet (the smellier the better, if they're finicky).

For kitties that seem uninterested in drinking enough water, try offering them the liquid portion of a can of tuna (only the type packed in water) or mix some clam juice into their water. Some pet food companies sell "milk" that is lactose free and usually tasty for cats. You may also want to moisten their dry food with a bit of water or add Pedialyte to their water bowl.

There are also specific events which may cause your cat to lose too much water. If the weather is extremely hot for an extended period of time or if they have a fever they are at risk of dehydration. If they have vomited or experienced diarrhea, this could be a risk factor as well. If they excessively drool, urinate, are nursing or have diabetes they are also at risk.

Here's what to specifically look for, in order to diagnose dehydration:

- Panting
- Lethargy
- Coat lacks "luster"
- Sunken eyes
- No desire to eat
- Fast heart rate
- Less skin elasticity



Another way you may be able to detect dehydration, is by performing the skin turgor test. Gently grab and then softly lift the skin, between the shoulder blades, on the back of your cat's neck (forming a "tent"). If it immediately snaps back, once you let go, it is not indicating dehydration. If it stays lifted, or only slowly goes back down, you should call your veterinarian immediately.

Most importantly, dehydration can be a sign of an underlying health problem. So if you suspect your cat is dehydrated, there is no substitute for taking them to their veterinarian right away. Once they check out as healthy, you can take steps to help them drink more liquids and protect their overall health!