

The Animal Hospital of Gurnee, P.C.

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UPPER RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS IN CATS

Viruses are the cause of upper respiratory infections (URI) in cats. Most of these can be prevented with yearly vaccinations at your veterinarian. Of all the domestic species the cat is the most susceptible to URI. URI is easily spread from cat to cat by close contact with secretions from the eyes and nose which are highly concentrated with the virus. The incubation period is approximately 3-5 days. The duration of clinical signs is usually 1-3 weeks, with some cases extending upwards to 4 weeks if severe. These viruses are specific to cats and cannot be transferred to humans.

Clinical signs:

- Sneezing
- Runny eyes or nose
- Red eyes
- Coughing
- Vomiting
- Fever
- Decreased appetite/no appetite
- Mouth ulceration

Treatment:

While there is no specific treatment for viral diseases, The Animal Hospital of Gurnee uses supplements and products proven to decrease viral replication and boost the immune system to aid in the recovery process. Additionally, the successful and quick recovery of your cat is dependent upon good nursing care and antibiotics for the prevention of secondary bacterial infections that can further weaken and debilitate your cat. Prevention is the key!!! Isolate the sick cat from the other cats in your household, and wash your hands after handling the sick cat. Home care is an essential factor in the recovery from URI. Most importantly this means following your veterinarian's instructions regarding nursing care and medication. Wiping the eyes and nose with a moist, warm cloth will prevent discharge from accumulation. A vaporizer or steam from a warm shower may help relieve the congestion. Feeding tasty (meat baby food), smelly (tuna), or warmed foods will tempt most sick cats to eat. Most of all tender loving care and patience are very important. In severe cases your cat may need to be hospitalized for several days. Call you veterinarian immediately if your cat is depressed or refuses food/water for 12 hours, or is having trouble breathing.

Prevention:

Vaccines are the only way to prevent URI in cats. However, these vaccines must be given prior to exposure to infected or sick cats. Although not all vaccines are 100% effective, they significantly reduce the incidence and severity of URI. Contact your veterinarian with questions regarding a vaccination program for your cat.