

Callie is a female cat that has just turned eleven years old. She has been living with Ruth for her entire life. She spends all her days indoors and has the full run of her house. In fact, according to Ruth, if Ruth didn't make the house payments she'd think Callie owned the house. Callie has been a healthy cat for all of her life. She has had her teeth cleaned on a regular basis and does make sure Ruth keeps her current on her vaccinations.

Recently Ruth reports Callie has been drinking a lot more water than had been normal in the past and she is flooding the litter box as a result. Ruth also noted that she believes Callie is eating more than normal as well. The increased thirst has Ruth concerned about the possibility of diabetes, but she wants to know if her cat indeed has diabetes, would she have to give Callie injections of insulin.

Callie's increase in thirst and subsequent increase in urination can be symptoms of diabetes. These symptoms can also occur with kidney disease, a urinary tract infection, Cushing's disease, hyperthyroidism and other diseases I've not yet mentioned.

Fortunately, with a trip to her veterinarian, Callie's condition should be diagnosed. When we are presented with a companion showing an increase in both thirst and urination, we first consider diseases that affect the urinary tract either directly or indirectly. This includes those diseases I mentioned as well as others.

Since we are dealing with a problem somehow associated with the urinary tract, we need to perform diagnostic tests appropriate to this system. This includes a urinalysis to check the urine, which is the product of the urinary tract, as well as a blood test that will include parameters associated with kidney function. Kidneys are the organs that produce the urine. This blood test will also give us blood sugar levels which can be an important indicator of possible diabetes.

Armed with the results of these two simple tests, we can begin to formulate a diagnosis for Callie's problem. For the sake of this discussion I am going to assume, dangerous as it may be, that Callie has diabetes. The full name of this disease is diabetes mellitus, also referred to as type one diabetes or insulin dependent diabetes. It is characterized by a high sugar level in the blood which leads to many secondary changes in the body, ultimately resulting in death if untreated. This disease results from a lack of insulin production from the pancreas. Insulin is necessary to bring sugar, the body's main energy source, from the blood stream into the cells. Once inside the various cells of the body, the sugar can be used as fuel to allow the various functions within the body to occur. Without proper insulin, body function is obviously adversely affected. The good news is that although not curable, diabetes is treatable.

Unfortunately for Ruth, feline diabetes usually requires treatment with injectable insulin. Fortunately, cats are generally quite amenable to this treatment and caretakers no matter how reluctant they may be, usually become quite adept with the procedure. In my personal experience with my clients and their diabetic patients, the treatment regimen becomes routine to the point of being a regular part of the day. Having said this, there are cases where injections for one reason or another are not an option.

When the patient or the caretaker is not tolerant of insulin injections, we can resort to treatment with oral medications. In fact in some cases, oral treatment is possible without insulin treatment for diabetes. This is not usually the case however.

Diabetes can be very rewarding to treat, realizing that without proper treatment, these diabetic companions do not have a chance to live a normal life.