

Signs of illness and what to do next

Cats generally do a good job of masking when they don't feel well, so determining if your foster cat is under the weather will require diligent observation of the cat's daily activity and appetite levels. It's a good idea to keep track of these levels in a journal. You'll also want to record any of the following symptoms, which could be signs of illness.

Eye discharge. It is normal for cats to have some discharge from their eyes when they wake up and some may have more than others, depending on the breed. But if your foster cat has yellow or green discharge, or swelling around the eyes (making it hard for him to open his eyes), or the third eyelid is showing, you need to contact the foster coordinator to schedule a vet appointment.

Sneezing and nasal discharge. Sneezing can be common in a cat recovering from an upper respiratory infection. If the sneezing becomes more frequent, watch for discharge coming from the nose. If the discharge is clear, the infection is probably viral and medication may not be necessary. You can try nebulizing the cat to relieve her discomfort. Nebulizing can be done in two ways: (1) place the cat in the bathroom with a hot shower running (do not place the cat in the shower); (2) put the cat in a carrier, cover it with a towel, and place a nebulizer or humidifier under the towel.

If the discharge becomes colored, contact the foster coordinator to schedule a vet appointment because the cat may have a bacterial infection. Be sure to monitor the cat's breathing. If the cat starts to breathe with an open mouth or wheeze, call the foster coordinator immediately and follow the emergency contact protocol. Also, once you notice nasal discharge, monitor the cat's eating habits more closely to ensure that he or she is still eating.

Loss of appetite. Your foster cat may be stressed after arriving in your home, and stress can cause lack of appetite. But if the cat hasn't eaten after 24 hours, please notify the foster coordinator. Also, if the cat has been eating well, but then stops eating for 12 to 24 hours, call the foster coordinator to set up a vet appointment. Please do not change the cat's diet without contacting the foster department. An abrupt change in diet can cause diarrhea, which can lead to dehydration.

Lethargy. The activity level of your foster cat will vary depending on age and personality. Keeping an activity log and journal will help you notice whether your foster cat is less active than he normally is. If the cat cannot be roused or seems weak and unable to stand, it's an emergency, so start the emergency contact protocol.

Dehydration. Dehydration is usually associated with diarrhea, vomiting and/or loss of appetite. To test for dehydration, gently pinch the cat's skin around the scruff area. If the skin stays taut, the cat is dehydrated. Please call the foster coordinator the next business day to schedule a vet appointment.

Vomiting. Sometimes cats will vomit up a thick tubular hairball with bile or other liquids. This is normal, but please call the foster coordinator if the cat has out-of-the-ordinary vomiting that does not occur in conjunction with a hairball. Don't worry about one or two vomiting episodes as long as the cat is acting normally otherwise: eating, active, no diarrhea.

Pain or strain while urinating. When a cat first goes into a foster home, he or she may not urinate due to stress. If the cat hasn't urinated in more than 24 hours, however, please contact the foster coordinator. Also, if you notice the cat straining to urinate with little or no results, or crying out when urinating, please contact the foster coordinator immediately because it may be indicative of an infection or a urethral obstruction, which can be life-threatening.

Diarrhea. It is important to monitor your foster cat's pooping habits daily. Soft stool is normal for the first two or three days after taking a cat home, most likely caused by stress and a change in food. If your foster cat has liquid stool, however, please contact the foster department so that an appointment can be scheduled to ensure that the cat doesn't need medications. Keep in mind that diarrhea will dehydrate the cat, so be proactive about contacting the foster department. If your foster cat has bloody or mucoid diarrhea, please contact the foster coordinator immediately and start the emergency contact protocol.

Frequent ear scratching. Your foster cat may have ear mites if she scratches her ears often and/or shakes her head frequently, or if you see a dark discharge that resembles coffee grounds when you look in her ears. Ear mites can be treated by a veterinarian, so please call or email the foster coordinator for a medical appointment.

Swollen, irritated ears. If your foster cat has irritated, swollen or red or pink ears that smell like yeast, he may have an ear infection called otitis. It's more common in dogs, but some cats do get it. If you see these signs, please contact the foster coordinator.

Hair loss. Please contact the foster department if you notice any hair loss on your foster cat. It is normal for cats to have thin fur around the lips, eyelids and in front of the ears, but clumpy patches of hair loss or thinning hair can indicate ringworm or dermatitis. It is important to check your foster cat's coat every day.

Common ailments in animals from shelters

Shelter cats may suffer from upper respiratory infection, giardia or intestinal parasites. Symptoms of upper respiratory infection include sneezing (often with colored discharge), discharge from the nose and/or eyes, decrease in appetite, dehydration and slight lethargy. Symptoms of giardia or intestinal parasites include vomiting, diarrhea (often with a pungent odor) and/or dehydration.

If your foster cat is displaying one or more of these signs, please contact the foster coordinator. These ailments can worsen if left untreated.

Criteria for emergencies

What constitutes a medical emergency in a cat? A good rule of thumb is any situation in which you would call 911 for a person. Here are some specific symptoms that could indicate an emergency:

- Not breathing or labored breathing
- Signs of extreme dehydration: dry gums, weakness, vomiting, not urinating, skin tenting (when the skin is pulled up, it stays there)
- Abnormal lethargy or unable to stand
- Unconsciousness or unable to wake up
- Cold to the touch
- Broken bones
- Any trauma: hit by a car, dropped, stepped on
- A large wound or profuse bleeding that doesn't stop when pressure is applied
- Loss of appetite for more than 24 hours

If your foster cat displays any of these symptoms, please follow the emergency phone protocol. If the animal is vomiting or has diarrhea, but is still active, eating and drinking, you can probably wait until the next day to get help.

If you think your foster pet may incur permanent damage or pass away if not seen by a veterinarian immediately, start the emergency on call foster coordinator immediately

Neonatal kittens under 6 weeks are not to be taken to an emergency vet. They can not treat very young kittens and can only offer euthanasia. Please proceed to Fading Kitten Protocol if you have a cold unconscious, lethargic or seizing neonate and contact the on call foster coordinator.

Fading Kitten Protocol

Fading Kitten Syndrome is a life threatening emergency in which a kitten, sometime one that was previously healthy, “crashes” and begins to fade away. If not dealt with immediately, it can result in death.

Symptoms: - Low Body Temperature – the kitten feels cool or cold to the touch - Extreme Lethargy - not getting up, unable to stand, not responding when pet - Gasping for breath - Meowing/Crying out It is caused by 2 things: Hypothermia (being too cold) and Hypoglycemia (not enough blood sugar). When this happens, it is vital that you take these immediate steps!

Step 1- Get them warm: - Create the “burrito” towel. Immediately wrap the kitten up in a towel like a burrito leaving their face exposed only. Their whole body, tail, ears, and paws should be in the towel, only nose and mouth exposed. Do not take the kitten out of the towel to adjust them, check on them, etc. - this is very important! Every time you take them out you will make them cold again, even if it is only for a second. - Wrap a HEATING PAD turned onto *low* around the burrito towel (to avoid burns) as an EXTRA source of heat. Secure it around the towel so it stays in place

Step 2- Get their blood sugar up: Once you get the heat on them, - - - - - Get a bowl or Tupperware and a few tablespoons sugar in hot water. Stir it up so you get a sugar water solution - as strong as possible while still pretty runny. Using a syringe or your finger give 3 drops every 3 minutes into the mouth. If they aren't swallowing, try not to get it down the throat, try to get it on the tongue or gums. Set an egg timer or use the stop watch on your cell phone to make sure you are doing it at least every 3 minutes. Every 5 minutes or 10 minutes will not work, it must be every 3 minutes.

Step 3 - Call an the on call foster coordinator. Keep kitten with you and continue sugar every 3 minutes. They won't have any extra advice for you that isn't in this handout, but they will need to be made aware of what is going on. Sometimes it can take hours for them to come out of it. Once they do come out of it, make sure you contact the foster coordinator.

Keep in mind, even with all the love and attention and perfect treatment of this condition, some of them still won't make it. Try not to blame yourself during this difficult time and focus on all the kittens you have personally saved by fostering. Any kitten you've ever taken care of was given a second chance at life BECAUSE of YOU! The Survival Rate with our care FAR surpasses their survival rate in Nature.

Edgar and Ivy Foster Emergency Guide

Non Emergency: post on private foster Facebook group or call 3612082459 during office hours. 12-6 Monday-Sunday

Supply Request: post on private foster Facebook group or call 3612082459 during office hours. 12-6 Monday-Sunday

Return Foster appointment: Call 3612082459 Monday -Sunday 12-6

Vaccine or medical check up: Arrive Monday-Sunday 12-6 at any time that is convenient to you.

Non-emergency health concern- Call 3612082459 AND post of Facebook group.
Also text 361438-0904

Emergency: CALL 3612082459, 3614380904, during business hours.

After hours emergency: This is only to be used if you would call 911 if the cat were a human. Check your handbook. This is the after hours emergency number only:

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