

Ear Infections in Cats

While not common, ear infections can be a pain for your kitty

Overview

Cats catch a lucky break when it comes to ear infections, since they get them far less than their canine counterparts. However, if your cat gets an ear infection it should be addressed right away to minimize pain and damage to her ear canal.

The main causes of ear infections in cats are:

- Ear [mites](#) (parasite)—especially in kittens; highly contagious among cats
- An [abscess](#) from a bite wound or scratch
- Growth in the ear canal
- Allergies

Symptoms

If your furry friend has an ear infection, you might notice the following:

- Discomfort when the base of the ears are massaged
- Self-inflicted skin trauma from scratching
- Dark or crusty debris in the ear canal opening
- A wet sound when the ears are gently massaged
- Head tilt or incoordination
- Uneven pupil size

Diagnosis

Ear infections can resolve quickly or become chronic, depending on the cause and seriousness of the underlying condition. To diagnose an ear infection, your veterinarian will take a thorough history of your cat. This is very important to determine if an underlying disease may be the cause. They will also perform a complete physical exam and take a good look at your pet's ears, using an otoscope to look down the ear canal. Depending on what your veterinarian finds, other tests or procedures may be performed for an accurate diagnosis. Some additional tests they may recommend are:

- Cytology, which identifies if yeast, bacteria, or other microorganisms are present
- A culture to determine which type of bacteria is present

If your cat goes outside, and/or if a bite wound or scratch is the underlying cause of the ear infection, your veterinarian may recommend testing your cat for feline leukemia and feline immunodeficiency virus. Both of these viruses are transmitted from cat to cat and are highly contagious.

Treatment

Treating ear infections can be very tricky, especially if allergies are involved. Treatment will depend on the cause, nature, and severity of the ear infection. Your veterinarian will recommend the best treatment for your cat.

Treatment may include:

- Antibiotic ointments, drops, sprays or creams for the ear
- Oral antibiotics
- Surgery (for cats with repeated ear infections or no response to other treatment)

Prevention

The best way to help your pet avoid ear infections is by watching for any signs of irritation. Keeping your cat indoors makes a huge difference if he has a history of recurring infections. In addition, keeping his ears dry will help prevent infections.

If you have any questions or concerns, you should always visit or call your veterinarian – they are your best resource to ensure the health and well-being of your pets.