



Radiation Therapy For Feline Idiopathic Cystitis (FIC) What You Need To Know

WHAT IS FELINE IDIOPATHIC CYSTITIS (FIC)?

Feline Idiopathic Cystitis (FIC), also known as feline interstitial cystitis is a common condition in cats marked by chronic bladder inflammation without a clear cause. It can be challenging for both cats and their owners, with symptoms including:

- Straining to urinate (stranguria)
- Blood in the urine (hematuria)
- Frequent or urgent attempts to urinate (pollakiuria)
- Pain or discomfort during urination
- Urinating outside the litter box
- In severe cases, complete urinary obstruction

FIC is typically a diagnosis by exclusion since very rarely is a bladder biopsy performed. Other possible causes like infections, bladder stones, tumors, etc. are ruled out first.

RADIATION THERAPY: A NEW TREATMENT OPTION

We are excited to offer radiation therapy as a novel treatment option for cats with FIC, inspired by a clinical trial at North Carolina State University (NCSU). Though final results are still pending, early findings are promising:

- 90% resolution of symptoms over one year.
- This is a single-session, low-dose radiation treatment targeting the lower urinary tract (bladder). It involves a CT simulation (a radiation planning CT scan) followed by the treatment itself, both performed under anesthesia or sedation.
- Timeline: The process can be completed in one day (CT scan and radiation together) or split, with the CT scan one day and the radiation treatment the next, depending on scheduling and your cat's needs.

Unlike radiation therapy treatment for cancer and other diseases, this treatment does not require multiple visits.

IS YOUR CAT ELIGIBLE?

Radiation therapy may benefit cats with FIC who meet these general criteria:

- Persistent urinary issues like straining, bloody urine, or frequent urination
- Cats with or without a history of urethral obstructions
- Male cats may show a stronger response, based on early data
- No underlying causes (e.g., infections, stones, or tumors) identified

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PRE-TREATMENT EVALUATION

To ensure this treatment is appropriate, all cats must be thoroughly assessed by our Internal Medicine team. This includes:

- Urinalysis and culture: To rule out infections
- Abdominal ultrasound: To check for stones, anatomic, or architectural abnormalities
- Stress and environmental review: Identifying and managing factors that could contribute to symptoms
- Systemic Blood work

This evaluation confirms FIC as the diagnosis and ensures radiation therapy is a safe, suitable option.

WHAT ABOUT SIDE EFFECTS?

This treatment protocol uses a single, low-dose radiation treatment focused solely on the bladder, carefully planned with the CT simulation to minimize impact on surrounding tissues. Long-term side effects are not expected, and none have been reported in the NCSU trial so far. However, some cats may experience acute side effects, including mild, short-term inflammation of the bladder, which could in rare cases temporarily worsen symptoms like straining or discomfort. These effects, if they occur, typically resolve quickly on their own.

COULD THIS HELP YOUR CAT?

To date, no specific therapy has been shown to beneficially address bladder inflammation in cats with FIC. Treatments are generally focused on symptomatic pain management and long-term mood stabilizing medications.

If your cat struggles with recurring urinary problems despite standard treatments, radiation therapy might provide lasting relief. To learn more or see if your cat qualifies, contact us to schedule an Internal Medicine consultation.

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